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155 PAGES

EXTRA BRAKING HORSE POWER

BI-MONTHLY | VOL 05 | ISSUE 05 | JUNE - JULY 2015
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PULSAR
AS200/150

6000cc
REVIEWED!

DUCATI
MONSTER 821



xBhp

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BENELLI
TNT 300

INDIAN SCOUT

KTM RC8

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Apache RTR | Flame DS

110/80-17

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Pulsar 200 | Yamaha FZ,
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OUR PLEDGE

To be one of the best motorcycle touring and lifestyle magazines in the world.

To ensure that the biker is more important than the bike.

To capture and share our motorcycling experience through our lenses and inspire others to do so.

To promote motorcycling as an indispensable part of life, all the more for the youth of this generation and those to follow.

To promote safe motorcycling practices by leading through example.

To inspire those not acquainted with motorcycling to venture into this amazing world of adventure, skills, fulfilment and camaraderie.

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From the Editor's Desk

26th June 2003. It was around midnight. I typed in the words www.xBhp.com into the Internet domain registry for the first time and pressed the button which started it all. Fast forward 12 years and xBhp is still going strong. The road in these twelve years has been bumpy but exciting. My baby is going to be in the teens soon.

Your baby. Our baby.

From the #thankYouRide I inferred that xBhp means a lot of things to a lot of people. It has inspired, connected and fuelled a new generation of motorcyclists in India.

Now what next?

As serendipitous this journey might be it always pays off to plan the family, the future and not be callous about what it wants. In the coming year xBhp will hopefully not only keep connecting bikers around India, but it will also spearhead some social causes and do more in motorcycle touring. We are also looking at a new revamped website in the coming weeks.

We are excited to be able to be working with world-class companies and do novel and sensible activities to further develop motorcycling as a lifestyle in India.

There was a time when we had to turn the pages of western motorcycle magazines to ogle at all the nice bikes and turn them into wallpapers on our rooms. These days it is almost the other way around, there are almost always exciting launches happening here, be the homebred Pulsar AS duo, or our neighbour's produce – the Thai made Ducati Monster 821, or the iconic bike from across the far seas – the Indian Scout or one of the world's fastest production bikes that is in the xBhp stable – the Suzuki Hayabusa shod with Pirelli tyres and livery – things are getting exciting by the minute. Oh, I almost forgot the very rare KTM RC8 right here in Delhi!

I would also like to raise a toast to the Chennai Superbiker Club for their ride around India on four superbikes for a worthy cause. You can catch more about them on the xBhp forums. In this issue we will be covering a plethora of motorcycles of varying capacities to appeal to bikers at different stages of their motorcycling lives. We also have a couple of inspiring travelogues that is a salute to the human spirit.

We hope to continue bringing you many more exciting things of the motorcycling world from around the globe. Until next time...

Signing Off,

I, the Biker,
Sundeep Gajjar
sunny@xBhp.com

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EXTRA BRAKING HORSE POWER

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EDITORIAL OFFICE

xBhp Autimedia Pvt. Ltd.
840, 1st Floor, Chirag Delhi, New Delhi-110017
Ph.: 011 46106991, Fax : 46074130
info@xBhp.com, www.xBhp.com

Printer & Publisher Praveer Kochhar
praveer@xBhp.com

Editor-in-Chief Sundeep Gajjar
sunny@xBhp.com

Chief Editorial Advisor Sandeep Goswami
oldfox@xBhp.com

Content Manager Sunil Gupta
sunilg@xBhp.com

Creative Director Sundeep Gajjar

Creative Team Ujjwal Gupta
(i-imazine.com)

Late Harvinder Kumar

Senior Photographer Sundeep Gajjar
(motoGrapher.com)

Illustrations Niranjan Gajjar

Correspondents Ashish Guliani
Avinash Noronha
Mohit Pal

Content Contributors Bipin Singha
Dhanush K Dev
Shaan Nazeem
Pratik Patel
Shailendra Singh
Aniruddha Meher
Sauban Ahmad
Mayur Mahanta
Rajesh Nikkam

SALES & MARKETING

info@xBhp.com

For Advertising Inquiries Please Call 011 46106991

VP Sales Praveer Kochhar

CIRCULATION & SUBSCRIPTIONS
info@xBhp.com

National Circulation Manager Vijender Singh
Mob : 9871259572

Print & Production Ashraf Jalil

ACCOUNTS & HR
Accounts Executive Bhupal Singh

LOGISTICS
Supervisor M.S. Negi

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Editor Sundeep Gajjar*

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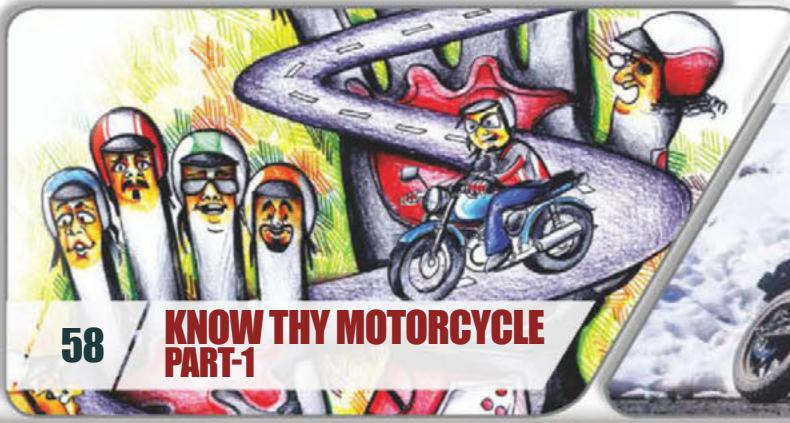
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12**DUCATI MONSTER 821****50****CRUISER GLORIOUS****58****KNOW THY MOTORCYCLE
PART-1****96****READY TO ROLL!**

In the June 2015 Issue of the xBhp Magazine we review 6000cc! Starting with the recently launched Ducati Monster 821 and the Indian Scout. We also review the Benelli TNT 300 as we rode it for 10000 km around the country. The recently launched Adventure twins from Bajaj the AS200 and AS150 were also tested on the curves of Lavasa, along with two more motorcycles in the 160cc offering, the Honda Unicorn 160 and the Suzuki Gixxer SF. We also get to know the inside story of motorcycle modifications as we speak to two xBhpians who have done extensive work on their respective motorcycles. We also bring to you two inspiring travel stories of Gurudongmar Lake and Parashar Lake. All this and lots more in the June 2015 issue...



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A KONKAN ADVENTURE

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RIDER'S LETTERS

Hello Team,

Congratulations on the successful completion of the #Thankyouride. You guys are living my dream life. I have been thinking about doing something of this sort from my school days when I started following xBhp, reading those beautiful travelogues, international trips by Sunny and Hard Torques by Old Fox Sir. But the journey of xBhp might not have been easy. Only 8-9 people in the core team managing a national level magazine and yet competing with those big names in the market.

Working in xBhp is a dream for so many bikers. Please tell us what the procedure is if we want to work there full time. What skills are required? And where can we check about vacancies.

I really love the photography done by xBhp core team in their articles; I have seen many people asking about the photo EXIF. Please if possible provide photo EXIF in a small box along with all the photos published in the Magazine.

Thanks

Sagar Singh, Jaipur

Via info@xbhp.com

Hi xBhp,

#Thankyou to the super awesome xBhp team for the superb #thankyouride concept. I thoroughly loved the concept of the ride, meeting bikers across the nation and recognizing them for their valuable effort for the motorcycling community. Infact few days back I had to go somewhere with my friend, but when I asked him to wear helmet he said "Let it be, no one is looking". Then I showed him the thankyou ride issue and told him that see these people are doing a nationwide roadtrip meeting all those bikers who have done something substantial for the betterment of motorcycling. I don't want that recognition but I want to feel proud about being a biker.

This thankyou ride has actually brought back so many bikers, revived those senior members of so many chapters who were not active for quite some time. This small concept of saying thanks has actually made them feel proud about their contribution towards motorcycling. Now if someone wasn't doing anything for motorcycling, he/ she will start and those who have done something good in past will now try to do it better and bigger.

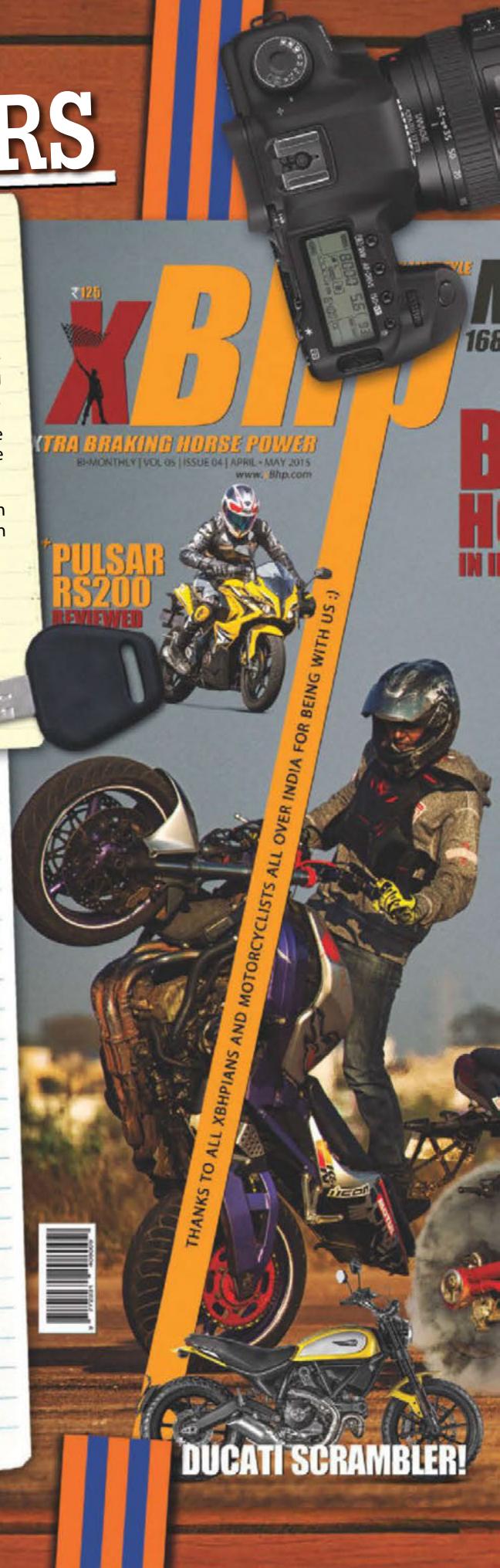
Thank you so much for doing something like this.

At last I want to request that this #thankYouRide concept should remain like this only with more thank you rides to come in future.

Thanks,

Rahul Tibrewal, Anand, Gujarat

Via info@xbhp.com

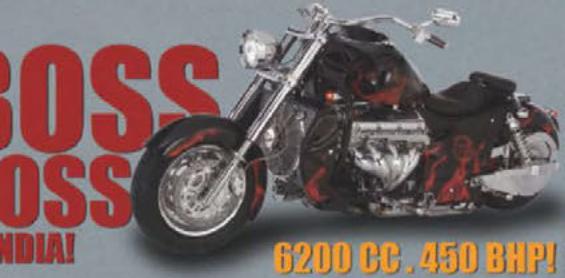




MOTORCYCLING

3 PAGES

MAGAZINE



#thankYouRide :)



Hello Bikers,

Just got the Thankyouride issue, couldn't stop myself from jotting down a few words for this amazing magazine. Starting from the cover to the last I really enjoyed it. I mean this issue was something that I could relate too, just because I followed you during the entire ride.

The thankyou ride magazine cover was beautifully designed. For me doing a burnout like this gives a feeling of accomplishment, maybe that's why I liked the cover a lot.

Ducati Scrambler and the KTM Duke article was well written. I can't even imagine who you guys manage to do so many things altogether like reviewing all these bikes along with a successful ride completion.

Talking about bikes I really liked the Ducati Scrambler. The seat height is perfect for Indian riders considering me being 5'6. The ground clearance is also good for touring and off roads with this 800cc engine which is more than sufficient for Indian roads. I found the Ducati Scrambler to be perfect for myself where I want everything in one bike.

That BOSS HOSS on the magazine cover made me skip straight to that page. Amazing to see a 6200cc 450bhp bike in India. I hope someday I will get to see it in person.

Helmet's off to all my fellow bikers,

Rahul Dahiya, Allahabad

Via info@xbhp.com

Hello xBhp Team,

I have been following xBhp for almost 2 years now. I'm basically from Chandigarh but studying in Pune. When I got to know that your ride will be flagged off from Pune I was super excited to meet you all. But couldn't come due to unavoidable circumstances and the worse thing is that three days before the finale in Lonavala I got ligament tear in my left leg. I was terribly disappointed.

But finally got the thankyou ride magazine copy on time. Thanks to cash on delivery facility. I ordered the magazine via COD and got a call regarding address confirmation within a few hours. I got my magazine copy within a couple of days as well.

I read the entire magazine cover to cover. It's good to see Ducati making its entry into India again. I'm sure that Scrambler is going to be a big hit in Asian market. I personally wanted to read the Benelli 300 review because I couldn't manage to come at the flag off or the finale. I had so many questions about the Benellis. I was also happy to read the review of the new Pulsar, it is a big step forward for Bajaj.

Last but not the least.

I love xBhp magazine a lot, please keep doing the awesome things like reviewing amazing bikes like BOSS HOSS and clicking beautiful pictures. I will surely visit xBhp HQ when I am in Delhi next.

Kudos to all involved.

Kunal Sharma, Pune

Via info@xbhp.com



CEAT
BIKE TYRES



oldfox@xBhp.com

Sandeep Goswami aka Old Fox

The business of biking



It is a driven world today where the road from ambition to achievement is as much about work as it is about that work being visible. A world where getting attention is as important as achieving, maybe more. Commerce is now the predominant currency of transaction, the primary measure of success and the defining agent of the life position in the hierarchy of attainment. It is a mad rat race when greed replaces ambition and a penthouse is built over the accumulated karmic garbage of broken relationships, abandoned kin, forgotten friendships, long buried childhood and drunken lonesome revelry. The money is not really bringing in the joy those advertisements so pompously promise. For the motorcyclist, the open road, the lonely trail or the curvy race track brings in life, full-blooded as it is meant to be. The thrilling tingle of excitement invisibly connects the eyes and the mind with hands and feet, the kindled soul aroused somewhere in between. Poetic or prosaic? Whatever but there's a point all this is leading to. And it has to do as much with motorcycling as it has to do with our lives.

The same need for attention, for reaching the summit, for being the embodiment of success is seeping into the world of motorcycling as it does elsewhere. The rolling tarmac is no longer the sacrosanct turf. The visibility gets compulsively hiked way quicker than the miles get accumulated. The coming in of superlatives is not patiently waited upon but either impatiently demanded or pathetically begged for. It has become mandatory that every trip on the bike must mop up not just the present value of the journey and the destination but also that of any future trips by others too. The narrative is the plastic man's unbelievable back-patting of himself with his own hands. The appetite for attention is an endless pit with each coin dropped in, those 'likes' and 'comments', considered a level added to the ocean of acclaim. The abiding idea driving things here is that of the essential superiority of scale. The more the miles, the grander is the persona. Even if the idea of such replicated accumulation is nothing but dead multiplication, of rides coming into being and getting over without ever coming alive even for a second. The same chase to the evasive horizon, the same wind, rain, dust and smoke, the same heat and chill and yet the motive hollow as a shell. Motorcycling thus becomes a mere product to be spent upon and consumed. The more you can, the better you are supposed to be.

Yes, motorcycling was, has been, still is and probably shall ever be as much about being a lonesome pursuit as it is about sharing. Even the most committed solo rider inadvertently becomes a sharer when amongst others of the two-wheeled ilk. And it does support its own hierarchies – but they are limited to being only those of skills and commitment. The races won, the miles ridden or the bikes owned attain meaning when each such pinnacle brings with it a reinstatement of the commitment to life as a motorcyclist as also a qualitative addition to those riding skills. Motorcycling, as any dynamic sport, speaks the language of humble aggression. No, that's not an oxymoron. The aggression comes from the ability to respond to a need with the correct and decisive action while the humility exists from always knowing that there's an endless amount yet to learn from it each moment. This is what converts a soft-spoken friend to a vicious adversary on the race track and then vice versa. It is not a battle of personas but that of skills and motorcycling not just neatly cleaves the two but also lets you easily keep apart. The greatness here comes not from squeezing out each ounce of value from the ride, preferably in terms of self esteem, but in leaving something on the table for humility and sharing to breed upon.

The 'image builders' sharing commodifies their riding but the price thus garnered through their endless efforts usually ends up revealing the inherent poverty of the actual product they end up peddling – their image. The sharing is not aimed at growing as a motorcyclist but as a visible image of oneself, the riding just a pedestal to stand upon, be visible and be counted. True, it attracts their own kind with promises of easy stardom but stepping in rudely reveals the jostling, pushing and pulling within that huge crowd of the aspiring, the existing and the fading starts. It is no longer fun but sheer hard work. They have succeeded in replicating their 'other' life with just a motorcycle and the road replacing the cabin and the desk.

The 'real' motorcyclist meanwhile rides off into the horizon with a sad nod of his helmeted head. He is happy being counted amongst the ones who prefer to create rather than consume. His ride is not a summary of the onlookers' desires. He rides not to play to the gallery but to fulfil his own desires as best his abilities let him. And in doing so he transforms the consumers into connoisseurs of motorcycling. **xBhp**



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E-DUCATI-ION

821

Photos: Ducati, Text and Ridden by: Sundeep Gajjar (motoGrapher.com)

I clearly remember. It was mid-2010. That's when I first stepped on the holy land of Italy. How can you be a petrol head or a fashionista and not visit this land at least once in your lifetime. I am not the latter but since I am definitely the former, I undertook this pilgrimage and how! Landed at the Bologna airport and made my way straight to the Ducati factory. And that's where my love affair started – with a Ducati Monster 1100. That was the first Ducati I ever rode and that too 8000 km around Italy along with a Streetfighter ridden by my friend and co-rider, Anurag.

Fast forward 5 years and Ducati has successfully evolved the Monster line-up without diluting its iconic appeal or brand value. It is still as desirable as it was when it first came out in 1993 as the Monster 900. That is an incredible 22 years into production! That is how icons are made. In fact the 821 makes almost twice the amount of power as the original 900 did in '93! That is progress.

The Monster 821 that I rode in Thailand on this occasion is described by Ducati as the 'Premium Entry Monster'. And for good reasons. It is cheap (relative to the Monster 1200), it is loaded with the techno-wizardry that we come to expect of any Ducati, and it is essentially the smaller sibling of the top of the line Monster 1200, sans the single sided swingarm in the interest of cost. However the 821 also has the three riding modes which control the Ducati Safety Pack features (RideByWire, ABS and Traction Control). This latest iteration of the Monster has a completely new Trellis frame, which





uses the 821cc Testastretta 11degree engine as a stressed member. This new frame helps save 1.23 kg as well over the 796. The engine belts out 112hp @ 9250 rpm and 89 Nm @ 7750 rpm. This is the same engine as used on the Hypermotard. The biggest advantage though is the major service interval which is a whopping 30000 km, while an oil change is recommended every 15000km. That is thanks to the Shell Advance Ultra with Shell Pureplus technology, which allows such long drain intervals.





The bike has a larger fuel tank (17.5 litre capacity) and a narrower waist which gets even sleeker at the rear, giving it an extremely muscular look. The saddle has a wide range of adjustment, from 810mm to 785mm and with accessories the range goes even from 745-830mm, giving a chance to a wider audience to enjoy riding this motorcycle. Though at the extremes how would it effect the overall ergonomics of the bike is something we would love to know. The 43mm Kayaba forks and the Sachs unit at the rear do a stellar job of keeping the bike stable when you want to go downright loony with the bike! To aid this everyday adventure you have the Pirelli Diablo Rosso II tyres which are a bi-compound, harder in the centre for longevity and softer on the edges for better grip when leaned over. And to take your safety up a notch is the 320mm double disc at the front and 245mm single disc Brembo braking unit with a Bosch ABS 9MP system, which allows you to get your bike stopped in a hurry safely on wet and dry roads alike. The combination of the Brembos and Pirellis do allow the rider to confidently push the envelope of speed without pushing his luck! The rider sits lower and further back as compared to the 796, therefore improving the centre of gravity and giving the rider more confidence to tackle those corners.

The 821 gets a much more comfortable riding position as compared to the 796 which it is replacing with the handlebar further back and higher, making the bike tourer friendly. And for the tourer you also get a 'Tourer Mode' in which you get the full 112bhp of power, but with a gentler map, while the 'Urban Mode' is good for beginners or just for pottering around in town. But the only mode for me was the 'Sport Mode', where an aggressive map with the full power of the engine is delivered with the rider assists of Traction Control and ABS reduced to the minimum. Though this is also customisable. The bike has a strong bottom and mid-range and likes to pop wheelies a bit like the Hypermotard (the latter is on a different level when it comes to hooliganism!), though it has

one of the smoothest gearboxes on a Ducati and a well weighted clutch which helps you control your launches at traffic signals. The roads in Chiang Mai where I rode this bike were super smooth; yet I feel the stiff suspension will absorb the bumps on our Indian roads well. In many ways the 821 has taken the best of both the 1200 and 796, and come up with a winner. The only downside was the bike getting pretty hot near the exhaust section, which might be inconvenient to a few riders.

Like all Ducatis, the Monster 821 also gets a plethora of accessories which are built with the same attention to detail as the bike itself. A couple of carbon fibre slip-on exhausts which come with a removable db-killer, one for track purposes while the other meets EU regulations. If that is not sufficient carbon fibre for the weight weenie in you, then you can go even lighter with the pillion seat cover and rear and front mudguard all made from this ultra-light material. For those who of us who like to ride into the sunset, there is the touring seat, magnetic tank bag, passenger seat bag and semi-rigid side pannier set.

The Ducatisti would surely like to look as good as their motorcycle and for them there are a variety of helmets, boots, gloves, jackets and riding pants to suit every kind of rider preference and personality.

To conclude, the Ducati Monster 821 is an awesome machine from the Bologna manufacturer and gives the rider an 'affordable' bike as compared to the 1200 and a much better motorcycle as compared to the 796. In India, the 821 will be competing with Kawasaki Z800 and the Benelli TNT 899 and it will be good for Indian customers to have a wider option in this segment. For the prospective 'Monsteristi' the bike is available in two colours traditional Ducati Red and Dark Stealth. **XBhp**



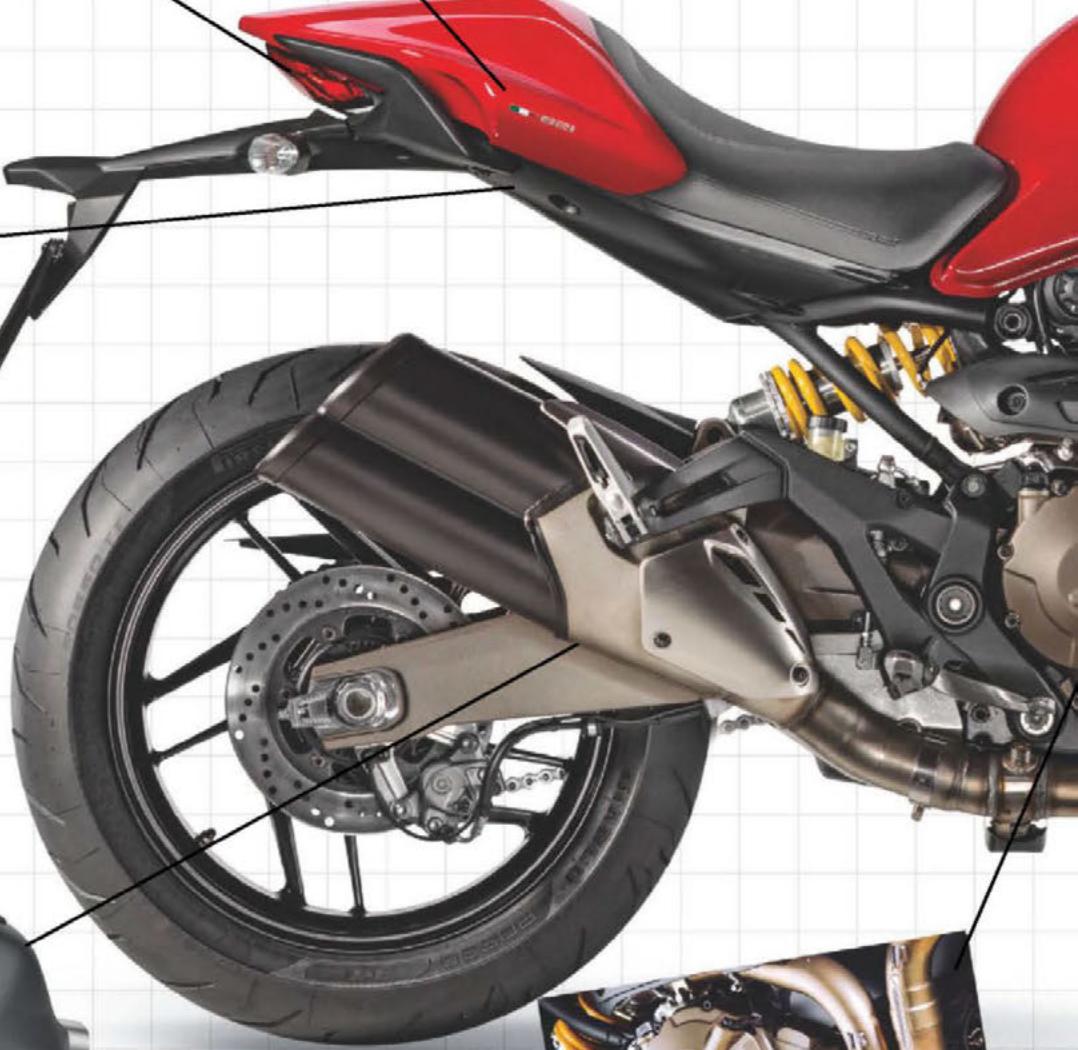
Dry Weight
179.5kg

Engine
17.5l

Seat height - Adjustable 785 - 810 mm
Height - 1061mm
Width - 867mm
Length - 2154mm
Wheelbase - 1480mm



Ducati Monster 128.
Not really. But we hope to see
something like this soon!



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xBhp rides and reviews the latest Adventure offering from the Bajaj stable- The Pulsar AS200/150

Text and Photos: Sandeep Goswami/ Old Fox



A long time ago J. M. Juran, the genius that he was, had defined product quality in just three simple words – ‘fitness for use’. Little would he have guessed then that a few decades down the line, a two-wheeler manufacturer in distant India would manage to bring those very words to life in spirit and form. The latest Pulsar Adventure twins from Bajaj, the AS 150 and the AS 200 make literal the adage, conjuring it up in metal, rubber and plastic. Modern and yet simple, these two motorcycles bring utility for the rider with a style that attracts and adds as much to form as to function.

Speaking of form, both the bikes are visually identical barring the different decals, the rear drum brake and skinnier rear tyre on the AS 150. Compared to their flashier kin, the RS 200, the Adventure twins are sober but no less robust and purposeful in looks and demeanour. The meaty tank with those strong contours, the tall stance, the solid looking semi-fairing with that sturdily mounted transparent wind-shield (these two together give both the machines that typical ‘adventure bike’ profile) and the clear head-lamp with the projector all gel well with the rest of the bike design which is essentially the 200 NS taken forward. The semi-fairing does make the design look heavy up front but that feeling goes once the bike is seen with the rider on the saddle. The clean lines provided by an under-belly exhaust add to the impression of the AS’s being slim and lithe machines, which in any case they are. The alloy components are equally well finished and add to the bike’s strong visual signature. The Adventure twins are well-put-together machines that add not just to the feel good factor for the owner but also to the feel-proud one.



The adventure twins





We will be focusing more on the AS 150 in this review since this has an all new engine, different suspension and caters to a different customer segment while the AS 200 is essentially the 200 NS with a fairing, targeted at the performance inclined motorcyclist.

Walking up to the bike you cannot help but notice those modern lines, the dense packaging and contemporary fit and finish of the parts that make the sum. Up close, the matt black of the plastic parts has been blended well with a similar shade and finish of the perimeter frame, the paint has a deep gloss, the alloy components show good surface texture and the non-slip seat cover looks and feels right. Swing a leg over the saddle, just sit on the bike and you feel settled in. Nothing outward pokes into your awareness, your body comes in contact with the bike at just the right places while the bars fall underhand quite naturally. Turn the ignition key, check the engine kill switch is flipped to 'run' and see the instruments go through a complete self-check. Push the 'tiny' starter button and the engine comes to life with a muted aural version of the typical Pulsar starter motor sound. The exhaust note is similar to the newer Pulsar brethren, only a little muted. The 150 also has a kick starter which is a very good move. We wish the 200 had one too – anyone who has taken his bike to the frozen regions of the high Himalayas will know how susceptible batteries are at catching a chill and a kick starter is worth its weight in gold there.





The 150 comes with an all-new 149.5cc single cylinder 4-stroke SOHC 4 valve air cooled engine. (The 200 is powered by the NS's liquid cooled 199.5cc long stroke mill) Running close to square dimensions, a lower 9.7:1 compression ratio (the 200 mill runs 11:1), this engine sounds quite unstressed. Fed fuel through a carb which is ignited by the tried and tested DTSi twin spark system running on multiple maps, it churns out a healthy 17 bhp @ 9500 rpm and 13 Nm @ 7000 rpm making this the most powerful 150 cc engine from Bajaj. Idling is stable and throttle response feels crisp. The engine, despite being air cooled is not as noisy as the previous iterations of the DTSi engines. The clutch pull is light and lever yawn is just right, what with those excellent dog-leg levers Bajaj has been using since the KB100 Delta days. Shifting into first is noise and jerk free, the gear lever throw short and precise.

On the roll, the bike pulls well from stand still with no apparent fuelling glitches or flat spots.



The 150 has a 5-speed gear box, a smooth shifting unit with a toe-only shifter and carries entirely different ratios compared to the AS 200, the RS 200 or the 200 NS. The tranny makes the bike a trifle low geared but then considering most of its riding life will be spent battling dense and unpredictable urban traffic or moving around at relatively low commuter speeds, it makes sense. There is a gap between the first two gears which might make for a difficult choice for the rider at low rolling speeds ~ 10 kmph or so where shifting to 1st makes for a jerky ride if the rider's throttle hand is not sensitive while sticking to 2nd will not provide enough pulling power. The problem shows up for a narrow 5-10 kmph speed band but it is there. The real fun though lies in the 3rd and the 4th ratios, the two being close together, keeping the engine in the meat of the power band at usual urban road speeds will not be a problem at all. The fifth is overdrive and good for cruising. Acceleration through the gears is spirited with the bike gathering speed quickly and smoothly. Our ride session was late in the day and so we got bikes that had been thoroughly thrashed out by others before us. Which is the way we prefer it since it is a hot and used bike that shows up its true colours.

The AS 150 also has a reworked suspension, tuned on the softer side; again keeping its utilitarian role in mind. And it works well especially on broken roads. We deliberately chose a torn up section of the road running parallel to the Lavasa reservoir and the 150 almost isolated the rider from the rough unevenness of the road beneath. Very comfortable. Telescopic forks up front and Nitrox mono-shock with canister and spring pre-load adjustment does duty at the rear. Tyres are tubeless mounted on 17 inch dia light-in-weight alloys, 100mm width up front and 110 at the rear. The bike looks under tyred when compared to the likes of the FZ16 and the new Suzuki Gixxer but there is more than enough grip and feedback without the inherent higher rolling resistance and so lower fuel economy that wider tyres result in. Handling is surprisingly light in feel and surefooted in practice. The 150, weighing in at 143 kilos feels almost like a commuter bike weighing around a 100 odd kilos. Steering is light, lean-in and out is intuitive and manoeuvring the bike is effortless. The soft suspension works well as long as it is not pushed really hard at the edge



of its operational envelope. Hard turns, especially when allied with multiple inputs like road undulation, mid-corner braking or steering lead to some disconcerting wriggling that makes the rider back off both on speed and lean. This though is not a performance machine and so rare will be a rider who will step so deep into such riding territory on this bike. For the average Joe, the bikes capabilities offer a wide enough safety net in performance and control.



Braking was one area that the 150 sorely lacked in. The front disc (240 mm disc) and rear drum (130 mm) combo in itself should be adequate enough though a disc at the rear is an almost universal preference. The front brake lever felt spongy, had excessive travel before substantial braking happened and as a consequence lacked both in feel and feedback. This in all probability is an issue either due to soft brake lines or improper brake pad material or both. Bajaj though was very open about this point and are on it to fix the problem asap. This is a critical issue and definitely needs attention at top priority. The 200 in contrast had fantastic brakes. Two fingers and a hint of a squeeze on the lever would beget retardation as demanded. Feedback too was great though such good brakes demand ABS as a necessity. Again the average rider does not have highly developed braking skills and powerful front brakes can lead to an inadvertent lock and slide. The ABS, especially when Bajaj already has the excellent single channel one used on the RS 200, can at least be offered as an option.

The rider sits tall, both on the AS 150 as well as the 200, with the butt being some 31 inches above the ground. But since the seat narrows down towards the tank, even those not so tall can manage to reach the ground with both feet by moving up towards the tank. An excellent tank-pad protects the tank paint from getting scratched. The tank capacity though is a disappointing 12 litres which will restrict range to well below 400 kms even on the 150 while being ridden in a very frugal manner. The split seat is good for the rider and adequate for the pillion though a lower rear seat would have made it easier for the pillion to get on and off the bike. Raised two piece clip-ons do duty for the bars and though a little odd to look at at first glance, they are functional enough and well-designed ergonomically. The backlit switchgear is the now standard stuff on Bajaj bikes and work well. The twin headlamps with one halogen powered projector (55 W) should make for great lighting after dark. We didn't get to see the illumination at night and so have based our comments on the available hardware that should be more than good. Tail and stop lamps are LED's while trafficators are 10w amber coloured incandescent bulbs.

The AS 150, with the braking issue fixed for good, makes for excellent value for money. Even technically, elements like the lower engine compression, forced lubrication and 15/45 front rear sprockets (bigger circles make for an easier turning chain which in turn makes for longer chain life) all point towards longevity. The engine should return good fuel economy with a gentle right wrist and the soft yet responsive suspension should substantially bodyline noise. The AS 200 is a more capable tourer as it goes quicker, brakes better and comes with first rate handling. All said and done, both the Adventure Sport motorcycles are great bikes for the price they are offered at even if the name 'Adventure' seems a bit of an exaggeration when applied here as it usually invokes visions of long travel suspension, dual purpose tyres, a large fuel tank and high ground clearance. With these two Adventure twins on offer, Bajaj has cast a wider net into the motorcycle market and should result in ensnaring a steadily increasing market share, something they well deserve. **Bij**





TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Engine

Type –	Twin Spark 4-valve DTS-I engine
Cooling Mechanism –	Air Cooled
Displacement –	149.5cc
Max Power –	17PS @ 9500RPM
Max Torque –	13 Nm @ 7000RPM

Dimension

LxWxH –	2070x804x1205 mm
Ground Clearance –	170mm
Wheelbase –	1363mm
Kerb Weight –	143 kg

Suspension

Front –	Telescopic with anti-friction bush
Rear –	Nitrox mono shock absorber with Canister

Tyres

Front –	80/100-17"46 P Tubeless
Rear –	110/80-17"57 P Tubeless

Brakes

Front –	240mm Disc
Rear –	130mm Drum

Electricals

System –	12V Full DC MF
Headlamp –	55W Low beam Projector
	55W High beam MFR

Fuel Tank

Total litres –	12
Reserve (usable) –	2.4

Price – Rs. 79000/- Ex-Showroom Delhi

pulsar RS 150



Pulsar AS 200



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Engine

Type –	Twin Spark 4-valve DTS-I engine
Cooling Mechanism –	Liquid Cooled
Displacement –	199.5cc
Max Power –	23.5PS @ 9500RPM
Max Torque –	18.3 Nm @ 7000RPM

Dimension

LxWxH –	2070x804x1205 mm
Ground Clearance –	167mm
Wheelbase –	1363mm
Kerb Weight –	153 kg

Suspension

Front –	Telescopic with anti-friction bush
Rear –	Nitrox mono shock absorber with Canister

Tyres

Front –	100/80-17"52 P Tubeless
Rear –	130/70-17"62 P Tubeless

Brakes

Front –	280mm Disc
Rear –	230mm Disc

Electricals

System –	12V Full DC MF
Headlamp –	55W Low beam Projector
	55W High beam MFR

Fuel Tank

Total litres –	12
Reserve (usable) –	2.4

Price –

Rs. 91550/- Ex-showroom Delhi

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After covering 10000 km across the country, xBhp gives its views on the smallest of the Benellis

Text: Avinash Noronha (The Monk)

Photos: Sunil Gupta, Mohit Pal

Italian dynamite

Rarely ever you come away from a ride with the highlight being the aural pleasures of the motorcycle. And this Italian Dynamite does just that, it blows away your mind! The most striking feature of this 300cc motorcycle from the Italian marque is the exhaust note. We kid you not!

After having ridden the bigger bikes from the Benelli stable in Lavassa and Australia, it was time for us to enjoy the little Italian beast. We didn't ride this motorcycle for 100 kilometres in a day or a short weekend trip. We took the Benelli TNT 300 across India covering 10000 km as part of the #ThankYou-Ride. Truly getting a ride experience of a lifetime.

One look at the bike and you fall for it, no other motorcycle in this segment exudes such a big bike look. The muscular tank with comfortable knee recesses, the quality saddle fabric with Benelli etched into it between the rider and pillion seats and the red Trellis frame all give it a premium look. The comfortable rider and pillion seats bode well for a long tour two up. The radiator on the bike is hidden







behind the plastic tank shrouds, while the 41mm USD front forks coupled with the twin petal discs add to beauty of the machine. The leaf shaped RVMs are sleek, but the twin stacked headlight up front looks rather small compared to the rest of the bike. A slightly larger headlamp assembly would have added to the looks me thinks! As you move towards the rear, the sleek narrowing tail with the LED tail-light look smashing contrasting with the fat Pirelli rubber. The split grab rails are practically useful not just for moving around the bike while off it but also for tying luggage to the rear. The bright red mono-shock at the rear stands out nicely. LED turn indicators are a welcome feature, while the flip open key is pretty cool and we all used it as a prop for a number of practical jokes! The exhaust gets a nice chrome cover which adds to the bling with the polished crankcase with Benelli etched on it; this gives it a youthful touch without taking away from the elegance of the 300. Move in closer and

you notice the weld joints on the chassis which rob the bike of some of its beauty. The fuel tank cover has a hinge which is helpful when topping up. Not that you need to do that a lot with the 16 litre tank! The switchgear on the bike is of acceptable quality and has all the functions of a modern bike including a hazard light switch. The front brake lever is adjustable for lever yawn as you find on any big bike, while the console is a clear digi-analogue mix. Tachometer, clock, speedometer, trip meter, fuel gauge, engine warning, neutral and high-beam and indicators are all clearly visible even in bright sunlight.

This is not the quickest or lightest bike in the segment, but the parallel twin 300cc mill produces a very healthy 38bhp and 26.5Nm of torque. Though this does come at the far end of the rev spectrum at 11500rpm and 10000rpm respectively with a redline at 12000 rpm. For bringing this 196 kg beast to a stop, the bike is equipped with two 260mm petal discs at the front and a 240mm disc at the rear. For footwear, Pirelli Angel GT 160/60 and 120/70 do the job of keeping you glued to the tarmac. Though

one can also get the bike with MRF tyres which are one size smaller than the Pirellis both front and rear. Choosing MRFs will also save you around 10 grand at the





time of purchase.

Take the cool looking flip key and slide it in to start the bike and you are welcomed first with the tacho needle going right through its complete arc and '300' being displayed on the digital console. Press the ignition button and the motor comes to life without a problem and then you are blessed with the sweetest sound you could have ever heard coming from a 300cc twin. Most of the time bikers present would mistake it for the 600i! Slot the bike into first gear and get things rolling, the clutch is a little on the heavier side, but isn't a problem in city traffic. The bike rolls easily as you realize how tractable the engine is, without downshifting too often, one can keep the bike going with no sound of the engine lagging. The bike easily does city speeds in the lower rev range, but the real fun of this bike starts post 7000rpm. You hit that mark and take off like a rocket, as if someone has shoved dynamite in there! The exhaust note which accompanies such hooligan activities is on a different level. The bass note increases in pitch and fervour ensuring that every bystander would drop anything to stare at that pocket rocket sounding like an in-line four at full chat. But every action has





an equal and opposite reaction, and when you go fast you need to slow down as well. The brakes have sufficient bite and are progressive to operate easily and safely bringing the bike to a halt from high speed. Though the rider has to be a little careful as the front does have a tendency to dive under hard braking.

The best bit of the Benelli is that it handles like a charm. Point and shoot is not a problem at all. Mid corner corrections though are not easy and a bump while cornering can upset the applecart as the bike tends to pogo a bit but all this happens only at high speeds where the chassis did throw up a bit of flex when the bike was flicked around. But nothing that sane speeds or predictive skill cannot counter effectively. The Pirelli rubber does a stellar job of keeping the bike and rider grounded. The ergonomics of the bike allow you to sit straight or crouch as you wish, with the slightly bent forward riding position. This aids handling as the rider always feels like he is sitting in the bike rather than on the bike. Though on a naked bike one always faces incredible windblast, maybe a windscreens as an accessory wouldn't be such a bad idea after all! The saddle which feels so comfortable on a short ride would be rather soft after a full day's ride especially for the heavier one's amongst us and so stiffer foam would have been appreciated. This bike proved its worth on the entire trip as at no point of time did this little 300cc get left behind by the 600 twins and the 899.





Along the 10000 kilometres the bike performed flawlessly without giving us any trouble. Though a few niggles were present. The mirrors frequently would get loose and needed to be tightened, while the fuel gauge had a mind of its own, from full tank to half to empty and back to full could happen in a short span of ten kilometres! Barring such small gremlins it was a pleasure having this Benelli to ride around India.

At Rs 2.83 Lakhs Ex-showroom Delhi, the Benelli TNT 300 is a steal, as you won't get any other twin cylinder 300 at that price. The bike has a premium build without a premium cost. Buy this if you want a comfortable, mile munching tourer which you can take everywhere as well it does around town. Don't buy this if you are looking for performance like the Duke 390 or the Ninja 300. This is not an outright hooligan, but a wonderful tourer that will blow your mind like dynamite! **XBhp**

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE

Type – 4-Stroke, 8 valves, DOHC, liquid cooled
No. of cylinders – In-line 2 cylinder
Displacement – 300cc
Power – 28.14KW @ 11500rpm
Torque – 26.5 NM @ 10000 rpm

DIMENSIONS

L x W x H (mm) – 2130 x 800 x 1120
Wheelbase – 1410mm
Ground Clearance – 160mm
Kerb Weight – 196 Kg
Fuel tank capacity – 16 lt.

CHASSIS

Front Suspension – Inverted front telescopic forks
Rear suspension – Hydraulic Monoshock absorber
Front Brake – Hydraulic dual disc
Rear Brake – Hydraulic Single disc
Front Tire – 120/70-17 (P), 110/70 – 17 (M)
Rear Tire – 160/60-17 (P), 150/60 – 17 (M)
(P) – Pirelli Tyres, (M) – MRF Tyres

PRICE –

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*The bike shown is only for representative purpose. Always wear protective gear and observe road traffic regulations.

An inspiring story of a young man from Asansol and his travels to Sikkim on his motorcycle

Text and Photos: Bipin Singha



Day 1

We were to leave at 4 in the morning but due to some reason we left at 5.30 so we were already late. We started riding and when we reached Mihijamroad conditions got really bad, pot holes everywhere so it was tough to ride and on top of that it was getting hotter and riding conditions in Bihar were horrible. We then had breakfast at Basukinath-kachorisabji! The food was really spicy full of Red Chilli powder! We continued onwards and as the clock struck 12 the temperature skyrocketed. We faced a huge 5km jam near Purnia, but somehow crossed it by going off-road with our bikes. We were taking many breaks for water and refreshments due to the heat. Finally when we reached Dalkhola expressway we stretched the legs of our engines and cruise at decent speeds and reached Azad Hind Dhaba for lunch. We then left Azad Hind and headed towards Silliguri where we met our friends from that city who accompanied us till Sevok Road. But something unexpected happened and it started drizzling. It was 6in the evening and getting dark along with the rain bothering us. But we moved on slowly towards Gangtok. It was really tough to ride in the dark and rain in the hills. Finally after hours of riding we reached Gangtok at around 10.30pm drenched in the rain, but the hotel staff was very hospitable as they got us food and helped us with our luggage. A big day riding more than 12 hours at a stretch. Phew!

Day 2

Permit Day as we called it saw us waking up early in the morning and rushing to the home department with all our documents to get our route permits. It was kind of the officers to help us out with the permits and issuing it within hours without any fuss. We got the pass in hand by 2pm, so we decided to roll the next day. With time on hand we visited MG Marg, grabbing some good food and beverages.

Day 3

The Big Day, we all geared up and were ready for the long ride. Our plan was to reach Lachenthat day as our motive was visiting Gurudongmar Lake though we planned to visit Lachung and Zero Point too. But due to extremely poor weather we chose to visit Gurudongmar Lake and if time permitted Zero Point as well. We started our ride at around 9 from Gangtok, without any problems we reached Mangan at 2. Unfortunately it started drizzling, but we thought lichen is just a few hours ahead and moved on. Enroute we had to overcome some really bad roads full of slush everywhere. Half of our bike tyres were recovered in slush but somehow we crossed that bad road which was called 'The Sinking Road' by the locals! As we moved on the rain got heavier, but Lachen was just a few kilometres away so we moved on. Our hands and feet got chilled with the rain. And to our bad luck



tour de
gurudongmar



we found that the way to Lachen was closed due to a land slide. We were trapped, heavy rain, landslides and Lachung the only other place with a hotel was quite far. Everything was going wrong; we were shattered but still moved on in the heavy rain. It was around 6.30pm, heavy rain, hill roads, landslides, no other vehicles on the road barring our 3 bikes. We moved on towards Lachung. All the riders were frozen with wet clothes riding on. After many hours we reached Lachung at 10pm but our day was going so bad that no hotel was available at Lachung. After a long search we found a small hotel room which was luckily available for us, we quickly went in and freshened up and slipped under the blankets. We were too tired to do anything, somehow managed to order dinner and slept off ASAP. We were in a pathetic condition with all our clothes wet, nothing to wear; only blanket covered body to save us from the cold! A tough day indeed, no mobile network, no electricity, absolutely nothing at all. We almost gave up at that point since everyone was half dead.

Day 4

"Wake Up, Wake Up" an early morning call from our fellow bikers. And we woke up to see the bright sun shining. Without delay the first thing we did was hang all our clothes outside to dry. It was 7 in the morning. Chilly weather but bright sun overhead. Got ourselves ready with high spirits and high hopes. Somehow one of us got network on our cell phone as we got a chance to connect with friends

and family. They were very worried as the news mentioned landslides and rain. We quickly had breakfast and geared up, but this time we took full protection and decided not to ride in the rain anymore no matter what! We wrapped our bags with polythene and our feet as well since we were wearing wet shoes. We rolled out at around 1pm, very happy with the hospitality at Lachung, they really cared for us a lot.

We then moved on to Lachen just as we were about to reach rain hit us again, but fortune favoured us this time and we got a shed to shelter ourselves. After an hour the rain stopped and we moved on and reached Lachen. We booked a hotel there and ordered for dinner. It was a nice day indeed with a nice riding experience. Unfortunately at Lachen also we didn't have electricity!

Day 5

The Big Day Finally! The day we all awaited and struggled for, facing rain, mud, dust, heat and everything else possible. It was 4 in the morning when we heard SUVs leaving for Gurudongmar Lake with tourists. We thought of leaving by 5 as

well, because every day it was raining after 2pm. This way we hoped to avoid the bad conditions. But hotel formalities took longer than expected and we finally left at 6 from Lachen and rode towards Thangu. Though it was sunny it was still too cold. Around -4 degree or so at that time as we were climbing. Our gloves and shoes seemed useless as our hands almost got frostbite, with red blood clots in the palms. Yet we decided to ride on, no matter what. Finally after tough riding conditions we reached Thangu at 9am where we found a hotel called hotel Dragon Lodge. There the people were extremely hospitable, as soon as we entered they offered us hot tea and Maggi at minimal charges. They were extremely happy to see us, and asked us to sit inside where they had a chimney kind of thing lit with wooden logs where we got some warmth. It felt good and charged our souls. So we kept our luggage there and moved on to Gurudongmar Lake. We also took gum boots from the hotel as our shoes had not yet dried up completely and moved on towards our dream. Finally we reached the last army check point at around 11am and they were not allowing us to go as they said last IN time was 10.30am. But we requested a lot and were finally allowed to go and there we found no road, the ride



was infact very bumpy towards Gurudongmar and after a bit we found a road going towards China and another which was for Lake Gurudongmar. We were confused at first as the route it showed was actually a small hill, but still we went towards the hill riding up towards heaven. As we reached halfway one of our bikes the Pulsar 200NS gave up as the altitude caught up with it. We thought of pushing the bike, but it didn't move an inch and the biker and the co-rider were out of breath and got dizzy as there was almost no oxygen. So the NS rider was sent down and the rest moved on to explore Lake Gurudongmar, India's second highest lake. 17100ft above sea level, and what a beauty. An absolute stunning view, frozen lake covered with snow surrounded by mountains on all sides. Happiness was touching the skies at that point but we could not wait there for too long as the wind was blowing across and chilling us to the very core. So we quickly captured few moments in our camera and moved down again. As we moved back it started snowing, so we

moved really fast to reach the check point as we were the only four people out there at that time and no one else. Any mishap could have been fatal. Somehow we reached the check point and informed them and rode back towards Thangu. We reached Thangu around 1.30pm. It then started snowing heavily, so we quickly parked our bikes under a shade and moved inside our dorm rooms. It was a small room, just enough for the four of us. We used three blankets each and got some rest, we were facing breathing problem there as it was 14000ft. above sea level. To top it all it was extremely cold and snowing. After resting we went out to see our bikes all snow covered and felt very happy about that as it is a rare scene for us. We then ordered dinner and enjoyed a conversation with the hotel staff who were amazing people. So down to earth and hardworking and hospitable. It really touched our hearts. Not wasting time we slept off soon that night with lots of memories to cherish and a long ride waiting for the next day.



Day 6

Early morning we woke up and found our bikes, our locality, and the houses around, all completely snow covered, and it was freezing. An absolute stunning view all around us. A dream come true moment. Though we could not spend much time there as we had to leave ASAP. We hurriedly had our morning tea at Thangu, wished the people and left. As we descended the road was covered with a layer of frozen ice and riding conditions were treacherous. With the bikes fishtailing on the icy roads we stayed focused and moved ahead slow and steady, as the clocked ticked the sun got brighter and we then had no problems riding. We made good time to Gangtok and reached our hotel around 2. As soon as we reached it started raining heavily. We then freshened up and met our friends there. Everyone congrat-



ulated us for successfully completing our trip and we had a gala evening in Gangtok. It was time to bid farewell to Sikkim with heavy hearts the next morning. We were upset as well as happy thinking about what we went through and meeting our family soon.

Day 7

Finally the morning when we were to leave Sikkim. It was a pleasant and sunny morning. We started our ride at 7 in the morning and without a break we rode till our first break for breakfast was at Sevoke Road. A quick breakfast later we were back on the road as the temperatures were rising fast. We were feeling the heat and it was quite tough to ride. Not just the heat but as we entered Bihar it was also the dust and very undisciplined driving as well which bothered us a lot. We then stopped for lunch in Bihar where we had lots of water to keep ourselves hydrated. We rode across



a stretch of 10km which was filled with massive potholes, where lots of trucks and cars had broken down due to suspension failure! It felt like a never ending road! Finally we entered Chittaranjan at around 8 in the evening and found our way home. Happy to get back home. We never thought we could make it due to such bad conditions but God was with us and our passion and dedication led us on a successful trip to the Holy Lake – Gurudongmar. A trip to remember and cherish. We were greeted by our family and friends and we had a long story to tell. A happy ending to our 7 day trip, 3 bikes, 4 bikers and 1 family. Yes we call this family K.B.C (Kulti Bikers Club).





ABOUT BIPIN

Courage against adversity is the epitome of all virtues. Not just because it affirms life in the face of mortality but also because it asserts the dominance of the will over circumstance.

Courage also inspires and Bipin Singh inspires even beyond inspiration. He's a biker from the small town of Asansol in West Bengal. A strapping 26 year old now, his life came to a virtual stand-still almost a decade ago in 2006 when he lost both his feet below the knees to a freak train accident. He was getting off a slow moving train at his hometown when he slipped, fell and was dragged under the train.

Devastating it must have been. Losing mobility, possibly forever, when barely stepping out into life is a lot more than a crushing blow, both for the body and the soul. And yet this gutsy young man did get up and not just that, taught himself to move and now runs with the wolves as fast as they do! He used to occasionally ride a Pulsar 150 before his accident and so motorcycling became his anchor, his key to everyday mobility. The wounds took months to heal, learning to walk on artificial feet longer than that and then the motorcycling. An iron will, an indomitable resolve and amazing support from his father sees our man ride around for work and fun on his KTM Duke 200 today.

His bike has a modified heel-toe shifter (since the artificial foot lacks both feel and flexibility) and in his own words he 'steps on the toe part to down



shift and slams on the heel to upshift'. Simple. He's done some serious long distance rides like one to Nepal a year ago during the monsoon! The slush, the wet roads and the lack of facilities – nothing deters Bipin. About the Nepal ride, it was done with a pillion and he laughingly narrates an incident – "I got tired of lifting my whole leg and repeatedly slamming down on the heel shifter to downshift. So asked my pillion to do the downshifts for me whenever I signalled for it with a sideways nod of my head. The arrangement worked great till the pillion got lost in the beauty of the scenery around him. I kept nodding away to glory, the bike kept slowing down demanding a lower gear and yet no downshift! My 'shifter' was lost till I stuck him on his leg to remind him of his duty".

Bipin says he has a 'number of different feet' and changes them in accordance to his mood! So much so that while filling in a form somewhere he left the 'height' column empty. On the clerk asking him to fill it, he said he is blessed with variable height as it depends upon the kind of feet he is wearing. His recent ride took him to 17,000 ft high Gurudongmar Lake in Sikkim. Not by far an easy ride, Bipin braved icy roads, freezing snow, deep slush and debilitating effects of high altitude during the adventure.

We at xBhp and also on behalf of the entire motorcycling brotherhood salute his indomitable spirit, his inspiring persona, his iron will and voice a heartfelt thank you to him for being a biker par excellence despite such overwhelming odds. **xBhp**

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xBhp reviews the smallest from the Indian family, the Scout!

Text: Sandeep Goswami (Old Fox)

Photos: Sunil Gupta, Ashish Guliani and Mohit Pal





Cruiser Glorious

The Indian Scout catches your eye. Low. So much so that you feel compelled to sit next to it on your haunches and try to strike up a conversation. Coming loaded with a legacy and trailing tons of history in its wake, it sure has tales to tell. And tell it does, even when standing still and silent. Tales of what bikes were like around the WWII, of the headwind giving way flowing past a low rider and how the almost defunct Indian Motorcycles rose Phoenix-like from financial ruin with wings from Polaris and soared high above again. But it talks best when you swing a leg over that low saddle and ride away on the smoothest rumble ever made and heard.

The Scout is a looker for sure. The designers have achieved the near perfect balance in proportionality, functionality, beauty and some more 'ty's' that I cannot think of right now. The crafted tank, the 'machined' engine, the stout and stocky stance and that wide single leather saddle connecting the beauty of a tank and the beast of a rear fender make for a design that appeals not just in large elements but as much in detail. You want to look at it carefully, intelligently, and yet each time you turn that gaze away, there's that feeling that you've missed out as much as you have seen! Oh! all right – I know it is eventually a machine and so I'd rather cut the sentiment and get on with describing what a'working' Scout is like.

The engine dominates the Scout as it should on any honest-to-God cruiser. This 1133cc, liquid-cooled, 60-degree V-Twin runs double overhead cams (DOHC) and 4-valves per cylinder. Fed fuel through a closed loop Electronic

Fuel Injection system via a single 60mm throttle body (yes, single), the engine produces some 100 bhp at 8000 rpm at the crank and 97 Nm of torque at 5900 rpm (For perspective and comparison, the Pulsar AS 200 reviewed elsewhere in this issue makes 23 bhp and 18 Nm of torque). The beauty of the engine though is in the manner this power and torque is produced. For instance around 60% of the peak torque is available from as low as 2400 rpm and remains right there till 7000 rpm even after hitting the peak value at 5900 rpm. That torque curve would be flatter than the salt flats of the Rann of Kutch. No wonder the Scout gets away with real wide gaps between gears – the 2nd gear tops out at around 100 kmph and yet you could be doing the same speed in 6th and still be thrilled by the acceleration when you roll the throttle open! The slick and smooth six-speed gear box and a wet clutch combo feeds power to the rear wheel via a toothed belt.

The ignition key, a very unassuming one at that, goes into the ignition switch placed between the twin cylinders on the left side. The very basic instrument console shows little signs of life when switched on but thumbing the starter makes it come alive like nobody's business. With a rumbling grumbling roar. Throttle action is smooth, almost organic in the manner it blends the on and off throttle actions. No fuelling glitch right from idle to near the redline. The engine responds to any and every input of the right wrist and lustily at that. This is one rev happy bugger of a V twin, the two other cruisers comparable on that front being the Triumph Thunderstorm and the Harley V-Rod. But this one does it with almost no vibes felt at any point of contact between the rider and the bike till almost 5000 rpm beyond which some buzz does sneak past into the pegs and bars. With a short throw of the shift lever, gear shifts are equally smooth as is the clutch action and the Scout can be poled around on the twisties with both the engine and the tranny responding to every demand from the rider.

This is a modern bike, no second thoughts about that. And the modernity shows up all the more in the frame and the chassis design which is a multi-element built-up construction. Divided into 3 major sections, the front comprises of the steering head and the down-tubes (which also serve as radiator mounts and shroud), the



rear swing-arm and the tail section and the bolt on castings that form the connection between the front and rear parts. The engine also connects the chassis parts together as a stressed member and the whole arrangement is neat, light-weight and very rigid. The suspension, though pretty conventional is quite functional. Front forks ride with 41mm dia tubes(4.7 inches travel) while the rear has highly raked twin shocks (3 inch travel) with pre-load adjustment only. The extreme rake does make the rear top out easily and frequently especially on the roads in our country. So the ride is good only as long as there's no real sharp and high crests or troughs. Hit a high bump and the rear tends to throw the rider up disconcertingly.

The Scout could well be called a sports-bike among cruisers what with that nifty handling at deep lean angles (grounds out at some 31 degrees of lean which is great by low-rider cruiser standards) with nonchalant aplomb due to that beautiful chassis and the gem of an engine running it. The light weight, low centre of mass and good leverage from the wide bars makes the Scout intuitive and oh! so easy to handle at low to moderate speeds. Weaving through dense Delhi traffic was fun, all the more because of that superb engine beneath the saddle.

Brakes are good too with the rear feeling quite effective, especially at low speeds. Going by the performance of the bike, the 298 mm single discs both front and rear (the front having a two-pot calliper while the rear with a single pot) do at times feel a trifle inadequate. Dual discs up front would have been a better proposition.



Both front and rear wheels are 16 inchers shod with 130mm tyres front and 150 mm at the rear. More than a meter and a half between the axles, 29 degrees of rake and 120mm of trail make for conventional geometry that instils the bike with predictable stability. A lower than usual seat height, with your rear just 27 odd inches above that tarmac flashing past beneath not just means security when standing but also that your feet can only go forward when on the move. That's cruiser-biking. The saddle is wide, soft and clad with great weather-proof leather but like all low cruisers, tends to rotate the rider a little backwards on his tail. Not too bad as long as that throttle is handled gently. Accelerate hard and you'll hang on to those bars for dear life, first against t h e





pull of the engine and later bracing yourself against the wind.

Weighing in at a little more than 250 kilos with all the fluids in, the Scout is a lightweight by cruiser standards. But then who wants extra weight when 0-100 kmph can be done in a little less than 5 seconds. The one glitch

in this neat design and low weight is the low range possible from the 17 litre fuel capacity. The lights are adequate when the sun sets with the minimalist instruments looking good too. The switchgear is nice except for those extra small starter and horn buttons on either side. The horn especially is difficult to reach for intuitively and even if you do manage to press it, the sound is even punier than the puny switch. Never mind though, blip that throttle and let them hear the rumble of the Indian behind them eh! The minimalist theme carries through to the steering lock mounted below and on the right of the steering head.

The modern avatar of the legendary Indian Scout promises to be no less glorious than its predecessor in history. Beautiful, effective and full of character, this motorcycle has an undeniable charm to it, a magnetic charisma that compels you to try and get to know it up close and real good. It glides smooth, runs quick, oozes class and rolls out its own brand of captive thunder, qualities that have probably made Burt Munroe, may God bless him in heaven, sigh in satisfaction at us mortals finally getting to experience his dream in metal, rubber and leather. *EBD*

Technical Specifications

PRICE-

Rs.11,99,900 Ex-Showroom Delhi

ENGINE & DRIVETRAIN

Displacement – 1133cc
Fuel System – Closed loop fuel, Injection/60mm Bore
Horsepower – 100HP
Engine Type – liquid Cooled V-Twin
Exhaust – Split dual exhaust with crossover

PERFORMANCE

Peak Torque – 97.7Nm @ 5900 rpm

SUSPENSION

Front – Telescopic Fork/ 4.7"(120MM)
Rear – Dual Shocks/ 3.0"(76MM)

BRAKES

Front – Single / 298mm Rotor / 2 Piston Calliper
Rear – Single / 298mm Rotor / 1 Piston Calliper

TIRES/WHEELS

Front Tires – 130/90-16 72H
Rear Tires – 150/80-16 71H
Wheels – Cast 16"x3.5" Front and 16"x5" Rear

DIMENSION

Fuel Capacity – 12.5 Litres
Ground Clearance – 135mm
LxWxH – 2311x880x1207mm
Seat Height – 635mm
Wheelbase – 1562mm
Lean Angle – 31 Degrees
GVWR – 449KG
Dry Weight – 244/253kg



Shadow
SCOUT



**Exploring the internals of a motorcycle's engine
and the electronics which run it**

Text: Sandeep Goswami (Old Fox)

Illustrations: Niranjan Gajjar, Sandeep Goswami (Old Fox)

KNOW THY MOTORCYCLE

PART-I

Everything, and for that matter everyone, has an inside and an outside. And when it comes to motive machines like motorcycles, the inside can be as fascinating and interesting as the outside. We bikers live for the twist of the right wrist, the tilting horizon, the blur of the scenery and the rush of the wind. And yes at times in the middle of savouring these delights, we sit back, look at and ponder upon the machine that gives us all. Romance apart, there's a captivating synergy to be seen and admired between the different parts of the bike and its engine that together bring magic even into what could be a dreary everyday commute. This edition of MAX gets you up close and friendly with some of the hidden magic of the machine.



Hi 5 with FI (Fuel Injection)

It takes just the right mixture of air, fuel and heat to run an engine. And almost everyone knows that the air here is the same that we breathe, the fuel that we buy and the heat a flashy spark from the plug. The air needs to be sucked in, the spark needs to fire at just the right moment and the fuel needs to be fed both at the right time and in the right proportion. Technological evolution has taken us on the road to reliability and efficiency from simple breaker-point ignition to the CDI units, from carburetors to fuel injection systems and amazing amount of power and efficiency from progressively smaller and lighter engines.

There has been a major paradigm shift in the way we tune and control our engines and that comes courtesy of electronics. Magic black boxes called the ECU or the Engine Control Unit decide about the what, when, how and how much of the air, fuel and heat fed to the engine. The ECU is the brain, the receiver of all the 'sensory' inputs from different parts of the engine. It makes sense of all the seeming chaos inside as you rev the hell out of the engine while exiting that fast left hander and meets output with demand. And of course as all this happens just as you want it to, you cannot help but fall deeper in love with your bike.

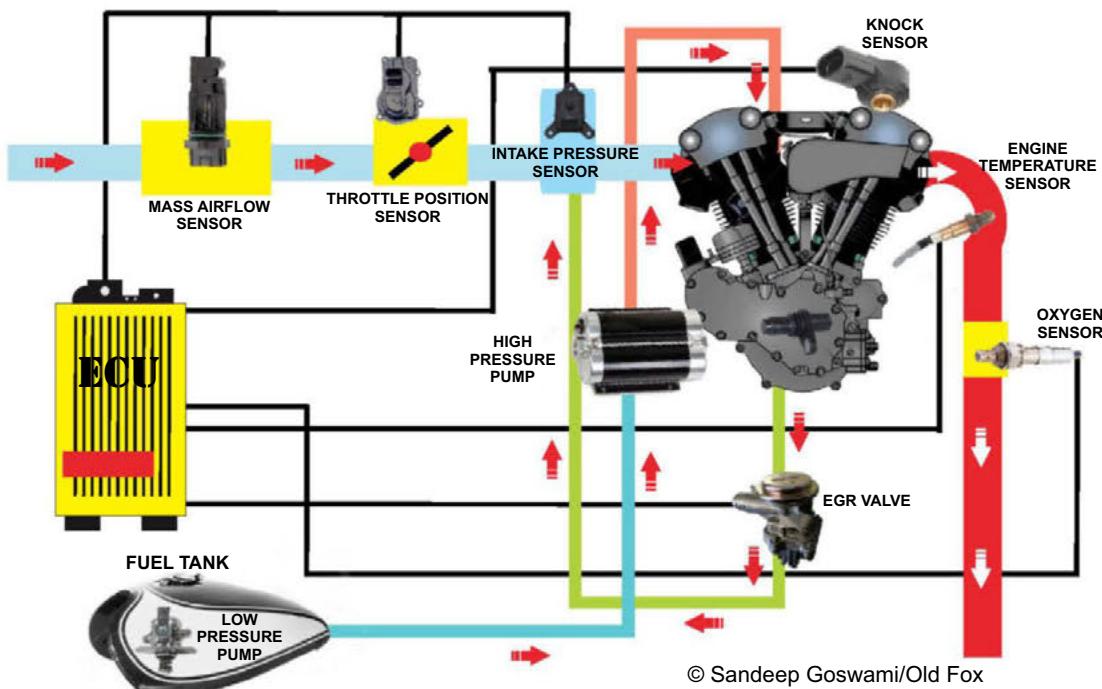
The ECU works on a 'map' – a word which actually means 'a descriptive plan' in the literal sense and on inputs from 'sensors' placed at different points inside and outside the engine. The map in this case is a set of responses to a certain set of conditions. At the simplest – you twist the throttle a little while the engine is at a certain rpm – the map stored inside the ECU tells it to release a squirt of fuel at a certain precise moment for a certain precise duration. The ECU neither knows nor cares whether it is feeding fuel to a motorcycle engine or one in a car or even on a motorboat. It just responds in a certain manner to a certain kind of demand. So the same ECU can be used in any automobile but there's a specific and unique 'map' for every engine. I still remember a knowledgeable friend swapping the dead ECU of

his Kawasaki ZX 14R with that of a Mitsubishi Lancer car (came from the same manufacturer, was much cheaper and available at hand then) with a suitable map loaded onto it and enjoying the bike for years with it!

What is the 'map' like?

Let's see the map separated into its various parts to make understanding it easier. The 'Fuel Map' for instance is a table of values that gives the fuel squirt timing (in milliseconds, i.e. a thousandth part of a second) in response to a combination of throttle position (which can either be percent of throttle or degrees of rotation) and engine rpm at that time. The values can be like – at 60% throttle and 6000 rpm squirt fuel for 9.2 milliseconds. At 30% throttle and 3000 rpm squirt fuel for 5.6 milliseconds. While idling in neutral at 6% throttle at 1300 rpm for 3.9 ms. This fuel squirt time defines the quantity of fuel that is fed to the engine for combustion. In reality this gets a lot more complex because there can be a number of other factors like air temperature, air density, coolant temperature, how quickly or slowly the throttle was twisted open that affect the actual engine response to the fuel fed to it. These are called 'trim factors' that further fine-tune the squirt duration. Some of these are called 'environmental trims' and they compensate with extra fuel for starting a cold engine on a very cold day or reduce the fuel for starting at high altitude. Engineers play it safe, especially when there's a lot of expected variation in conditions, and so usually the air temperature trims range from -55°C to $+125^{\circ}\text{C}$. Both pretty unrealistic or rather taking things a bit too far since at the former temperature even petrol would be close to freezing and at the latter the rider would be close to making an exit for his maker! But extending the range is not a very troublesome thing to do and so they try using as wide a set of conditions as can ever be envisaged. So considering the example cited earlier, the 3.9 millisecond squirt dictated by the table (engine idling in neutral at 6% throttle and 1300 rpm) might get reduced to 3.2 milliseconds on a warm engine at Khardungla Top (18,300 ft. above MSL) or increased to 4.3 ms for starting on a chilly 2°C Delhi morning in January.

TYPICAL ECU WITH ALLIED HARDWARE FOR A FUEL INJECTED ENGINE

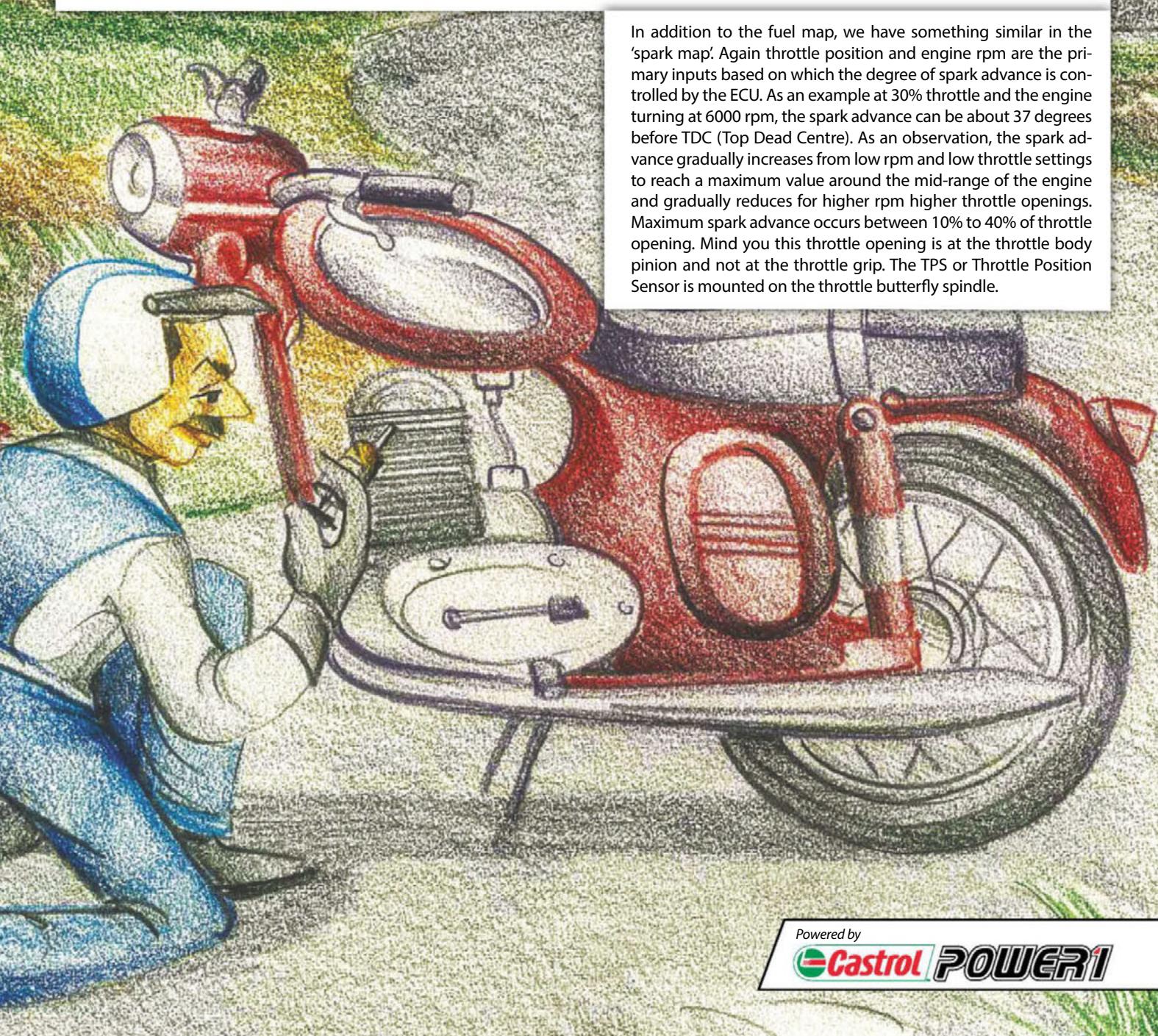


FUEL MAP (fuel squirt time in 1/1000 sec)					THROTTLE POSITION							
6.5	6.5	7	7	9	9.2	8.1	7.6	8	8.1	8.3	80	
6.4	6.5	7.1	7	8.9	9.3	8.4	7.5	8.1	7.8	8	60	
5.4	5.9	5.8	6.5	7.1	8	7.8	7.2	7.6	7.4	7.5	47	
6.6	6.4	6.7	5.4	5.3	5.4	4.8	4.4	4.2	4.1	3.9	36	
5.2	4.9	4.8	4.8	4.6	4.3	4	3.7	3.6	3.5	3.5	20	
4.8	4.7	4.6	4.2	3.8	3.9	3.7	3.5	3.4	3.3	3.2	14	
4.2	4.1	3.9	3.6	3.4	3.5	3.3	2.9	2.7	2.6	2.5	9	
3.8	3.9	3.7	3.4	3.3	3.2	2.8	2.6	2.4	2.4	2.3	4	
1200	1400	1900	2200	2800	3600	4700	5500	6400	7200	7800	RPM	

A typical Fuel Map for a motorcycle fuel injection system based on throttle position (in percent of max throttle) vs engine RPM.

Note: The values are only indicative and not to be taken for real. The actual map would have a lot more 'break points' i.e the intersection of unique values of throttle position and engine RPM. Usually these are 256.

In addition to the fuel map, we have something similar in the 'spark map'. Again throttle position and engine rpm are the primary inputs based on which the degree of spark advance is controlled by the ECU. As an example at 30% throttle and the engine turning at 6000 rpm, the spark advance can be about 37 degrees before TDC (Top Dead Centre). As an observation, the spark advance gradually increases from low rpm and low throttle settings to reach a maximum value around the mid-range of the engine and gradually reduces for higher rpm higher throttle openings. Maximum spark advance occurs between 10% to 40% of throttle opening. Mind you this throttle opening is at the throttle body pinion and not at the throttle grip. The TPS or Throttle Position Sensor is mounted on the throttle butterfly spindle.



The Loops!

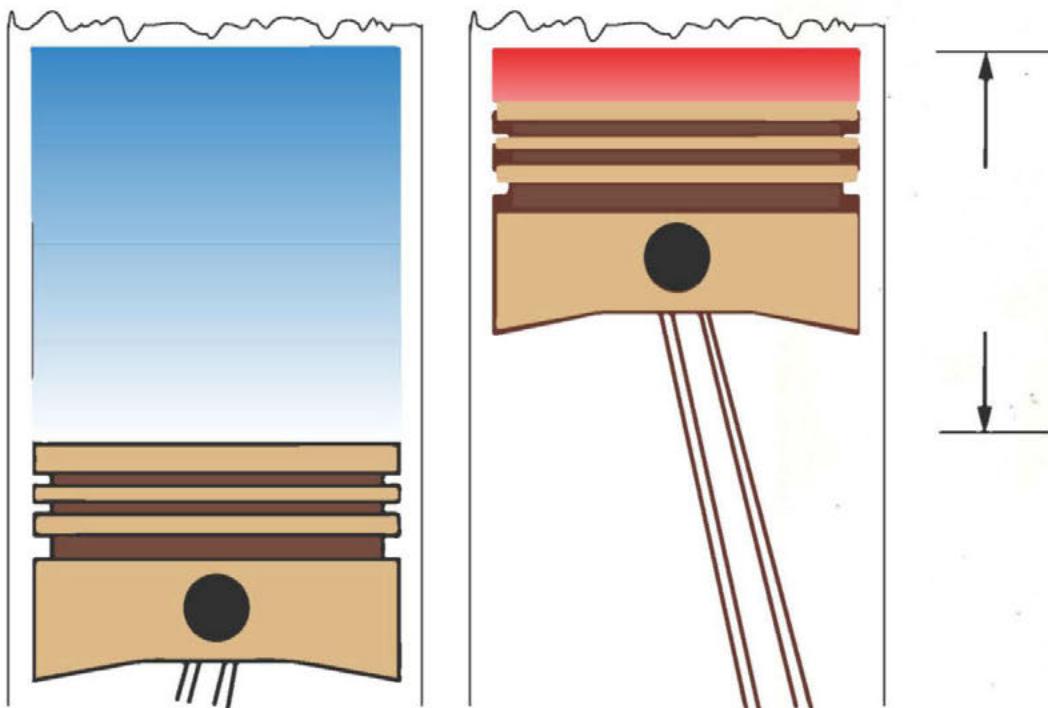
There's a more sophisticated version of this ECU and fuel injection that is almost becoming a norm these days. It is the closed loop system. The system described above is an 'open loop' system – which means that the fuel injection and spark advance are fixed values that get selected by the ECU basing its choice on throttle position, engine rpm and certain trim factors. The closed loop system adds combustion feedback to the equation through a 'lambda sensor' mounted in the path of the exhaust gases as they make their way out of the engine. This lambda sensor is actually an oxygen sensor (called by many other names like Exhaust Gas sensor, O₂ sensor etc.) that tells the ECU whether the fuel supplied to the engine was more or less than actually needed i.e. whether the engine was running rich or lean. It is also termed as the Excess Air Factor. We'll briefly go into how this happens as it will make for interesting reading. There's something called the Stoichiometric Ratio of fuel/air for perfect combustion. This ratio gives the proportion in which air and fuel need to be present for full combustion of fuel to take place while leaving no oxygen remaining in the exhaust too. For petrol this value is taken as 14.7:1 meaning you need 14.7 times as much air as fuel for chemically complete combustion to occur. So quick calculation will tell you that to completely burn 1 litre of petrol you'll need some 9500 litres of air! As a fun comparison, an adult human can take in a maximum of 6 litres of air in one inhalation (called the 'vital volume' of the lungs). In real life though there's nothing like ideal since the petrol is not a single hydrocarbon chain but a combination of many others as is the air which is 2/3rd Nitrogen. But for all means and purposes this ratio is sacrosanct and the basis of the Lambda sensor. So if the Lambda sensor senses that there's no excess fuel

coming out with the exhaust gases and no remaining oxygen too, the combustion is assumed to be Stoichiometric and the Lambda number is said to be 1.0. If there's some remaining fuel coming with the exhaust gases, the mixture is said to be 'rich' and the Lambda number goes <1 . If there's excess oxygen in the exhaust, the mixture is said to be 'lean' and the Lambda number goes >1 . So the Lambda sensor senses whether the engine is running rich or lean and tells the ECU to adjust fuel squirt duration accordingly. Longer times for lean and shorter for rich. But the Lambda sensor is not able to measure how rich or lean the engine is so the ECU makes the changes in small increments, waits for Lambda feedback, checks whether still rich or lean and so eventually settles at as close to Stoichiometric as possible. This happens pretty quickly though and this 'closed loop' of information-action is why we call the system closed loop.

But why do we need the Lambda Sensors?

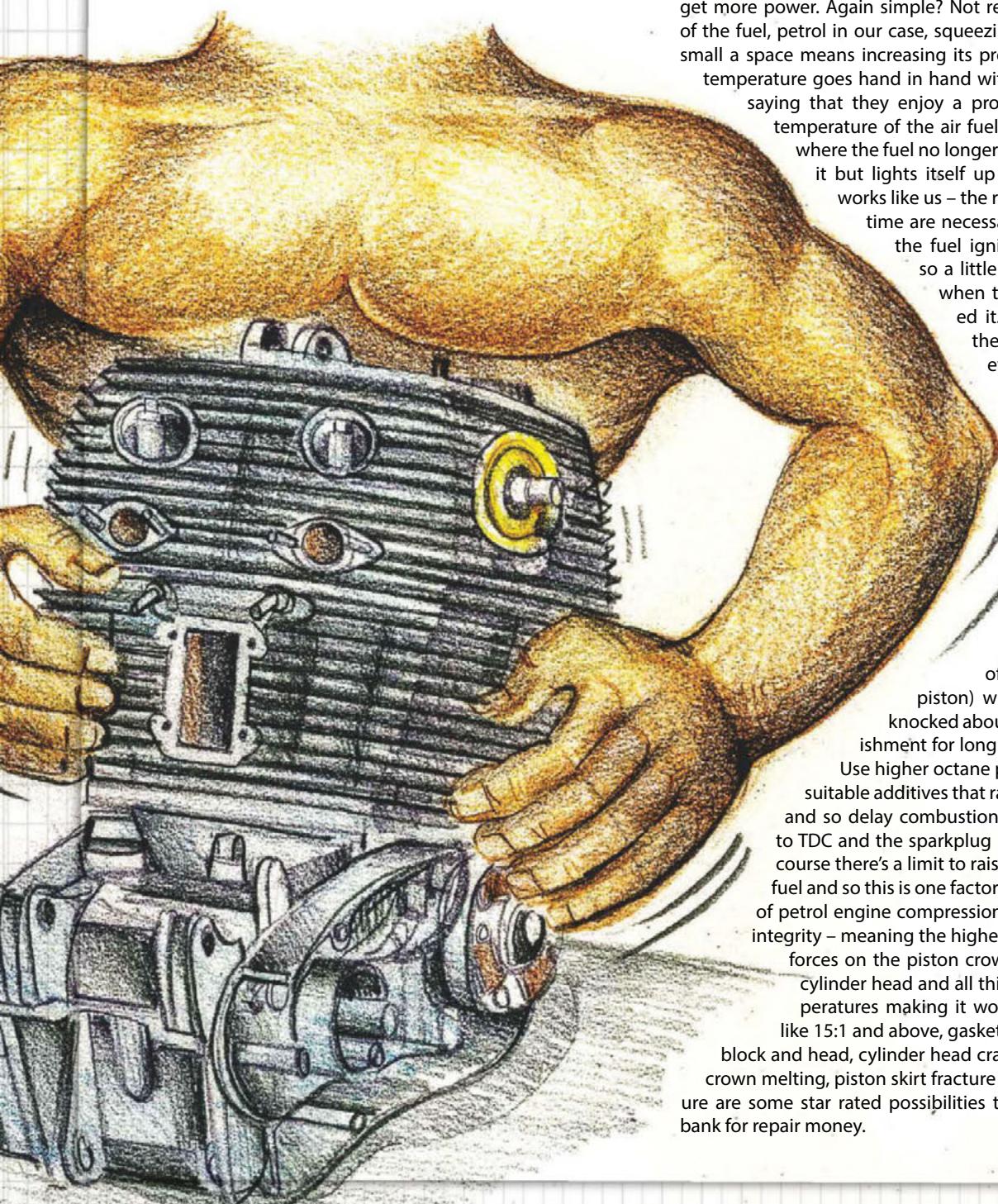
For our own and Mother Earth's benefit. Burning fossil fuel produces three major pollutants – Carbon Monoxide, some toxic Hydrocarbons and Nitrous Oxides. Initially our vehicles had catalytic converters that only processed and removed the first two of the three mentioned above. Modern day 3-way Catalytic Converters remove all three. Of these, the Nitrous Oxides or the NO_x compounds form when combustion temperatures are high while Hydrocarbons arise from rich mixtures and CO from lean combustion. The Lambda sensor in conjunction with the 3-way Cat Con helps keep the exhaust gases cleaner. So much so that going by the prevailing pollution levels in Delhi, our modern engines are probably exhausting air that is cleaner than what they are taking in!

■ Diagram of Compression



The Compression Game

Some wise guy reduced the 4-stroke cycle literally to four words – suck, squeeze, bang, blow! Well, mischief and humour apart, it does get the meaning across. The 'suck' is the intake stroke with the piston going down inside the bore and so sucking in the fresh air fuel mix. The 'squeeze' is the piston coming up to compress the air fuel mix. The 'bang' of course is the spark plug firing and lighting up the fireworks inside sending the piston powering down – actually the only time when it does useful work. The 'blow' is when the piston goes up again one last time in each cycle and pushes the now useless burnt gases out of the cylinder to clear the way for a fresh round of air-fuel mix to come at it with the next 'suck' waiting at the door.



The squeeze is what we shall be discussing here and will now on be called compression to get things on a serious plane. Every reciprocating engine is defined by its compression ratio (CR) in tandem with various other specifications. This compression ratio is the ratio of how much volume the cylinder contains when the piston is at the bottom most part of its stroke i.e. BDC or Bottom Dead Centre compared to when it is at the TDC i.e. Top Dead Centre. So if a cylinder contains 250 cc's of air-fuel at BDC which gets compressed to 25cc's by the piston at TDC, the engine has a compression ratio of 10:1. Pretty simple actually.

This compression ratio has a direct bearing on how much power and how efficiently the engine produces it. Increase the CR and get more power. Again simple? Not really. Because of the nature of the fuel, petrol in our case, squeezing the air-fuel mix into too small a space means increasing its pressure too much and since temperature goes hand in hand with pressure (simpler way of saying that they enjoy a proportional relationship) the

temperature of the air fuel mix increases to the point where the fuel no longer waits for the spark to ignite it but lights itself up spontaneously. An engine works like us – the right actions at just the right time are necessary for its health. But when the fuel ignites spontaneously, it does so a little before its designated time when the spark would have ignited it. This early burning means the hot gases start expanding even while the piston is still moving up! O boy.

That's wrong. So the 'power stroke' loses a part of its power potential by working against itself and the piston pushing up against an early flame front expanding down makes a 'knocking' sound (actually a collision of the pressure wave with the piston) which says it is being badly knocked about and will not take this punishment for long before dying. The way out?

Use higher octane petrol – which is petrol with suitable additives that raise its ignition temperature and so delay combustion till the piston has made it to TDC and the sparkplug ignites at the right time. Of course there's a limit to raising the octane rating of the fuel and so this is one factor that defines the upper limit of petrol engine compression ratios. The other is engine integrity – meaning the higher the CR, the greater are the forces on the piston crown, the crank shaft and the cylinder head and all this happens at elevated temperatures making it worse. So with very high CR's

like 15:1 and above, gasket ruptures between cylinder block and head, cylinder head cracking, blown valves, piston crown melting, piston skirt fracture and crank shaft torsion failure are some star rated possibilities that'll make you run to the bank for repair money.

Of course done right, increasing the CR does give dividends in terms of more power, improved engine response, better fuel efficiency and so a happy you. How do you do it? The simplest are using a thinner head gasket or shaving off a little of the engine head to cylinder seat area or using a piston with a higher crown. But few realise that increasing the bore also increases the engine CR. How? Well, imagine a 250cc engine with a 72mm bore and 62 mm stroke. The swept volume is 252cc and the compressed volume is 25.2cc. Increase the bore by 2mm raising it to 74mm and now the swept volume is 266cc. This bumps up the CR to 10.5 (266/25.2). So over-boring not just gives you a bigger engine but also ups the CR adding to the power benefit. Of course the engine needs to be compensated with the right type and quantity of fuel to reap these benefits properly.

Then there's the added complication of static and dynamic CR. Static CR is the mathematically calculated CR and is not usually what the engine works in accordance to. The difference creeps in because both air and fuel have their own reluctance to get moving or to stop moving (inertia is what the purists will call it) and so the effective (dynamic) volume change is different from the ideal (static). During the inlet stroke you'd imagine that the inlet valve would close just as the piston reaches its end at BDC. This happens only on very low revving engines. Increase the rpms and you get less and less time for the fuel and air to enter. So the engine designer has to choose between tuning the engine either for low rpms efficiency or that at high rpms. Since higher rpms when allied with higher CR produces more power from a given engine size, no one wants to make a low power producing inefficient engine. Not in these days of 'need for speed' at affordable fuel costs! So the designer arranges that the inlet valve will remain open for a little time (greater valve overlap with a longer duration cam profile) even after the piston has started moving up for its compression stroke thus allowing more fuel air mix to come in. At low rpms this does create problems because the engine is trying to compress the mixture while the open valve lets it leak out. The delay however is not so much that the engine loses almost all the mixture. But this does lead to the engine running lumpy and uncertain at low rpms. However, the whole thing takes a turn for good as the rpms rise. Now the air being sucked in has more time to enter than it would have had with less valve overlap and also since it is coming at high speed, it rushes in despite the piston beginning to move upwards. So more air gets in at high rpms, effectively increasing its swept volume than the static calculated value. And since this larger volume of air fuel mix gets compressed to the same 25.2cc's, you get a higher effective compression ratio! That's what dynamic CR is all about. So an engine might have a lower than static CR close to idling and through lower rpms while a higher than static CR at high rpms. It is this lower than static CR due to the use of a longer duration cam that forces engine tuners for high performance race engines to go for much higher static compression ratios. Otherwise the engine might just refuse to idle or run at low rpms!

Piston Passions

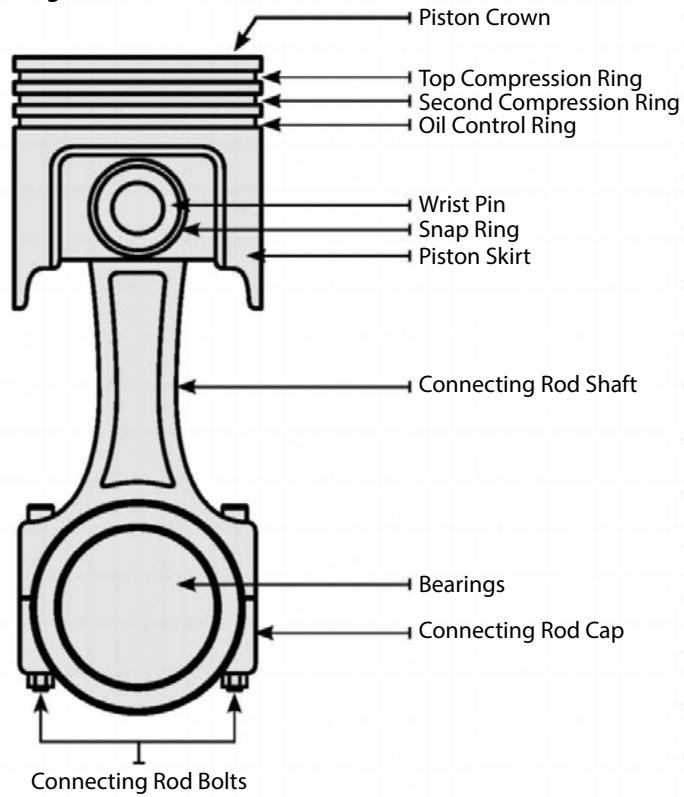
Imagine being pounded by forces close to 10 tons every two-tenths of a second while being heated to 300°+ C. That's what the piston in a modern day petrol engine is subjected to at some 6000 rpm or so. Crazy, isn't it? Every element of the piston – its shape, size, metal composition, grooves, indentations, slits or chamfering on it has meaning and purpose. There's nothing purely aesthetic about a piston – wouldn't be if you're to burn in hell all your life eh! And that hell is getting hotter by the day. Even ordinary everyday bike engines produce specific power around 130 bhp/litre. Compare that to 51 bhp/litre for the Escorts Rajdoot 175cc engine 30 years ago. And the

unending chase for better fuel economy, lower emissions and longer life is pushing engine designers towards lighter and lower friction pistons.

Pistons are primarily sliding components and so understandably account for almost 60% of the engine's internal friction. So even tiny improvements in lowering this contribution result in substantial improvements in the engine's mechanical efficiency. Reducing piston weight has a positive cascade effect on the entire engine weight. A piston in our everyday Karizma engine moves up and down about 50 times a second while you're riding along at a 100 kmph or so in top gear with the engine turning at 6000 rpm. And each time it goes up or down it accelerates from zero to some 47 kmph before coming to a stop and reversing direction 50 times a second. That's some hard work! And it needs some very strong connecting rods and crank shaft to prevent it from breaking free and bursting through the engine head. So lowering piston weight even by a few grams lowers the forces on the connecting rod and crankshaft by tens of kilos. Lighter pistons not only mean freer revving engines but also lighter engines.

While the piston itself does the muscular job of transferring power from expanding combustion gases to the crankshaft via its body and the connecting rod, the piston rings perform the precision tasks of sealing the gases above the piston both during compression and power strokes. If the rings don't seal well, the engine loses power and worsening leaks past the rings can result in an engine gone kaput. It won't even run at idle rpm, what of spinning faster to make useful power. Worn out rings or those not properly put in initially create what is termed as 'blow by'. Quite literal in meaning, this just means that combustion gases blow by the piston wall and rings and enter the crankcase below it. Any problems because of that? Plenty. 1. Blow by is dirty – burnt gases – and so contaminates the oil beneath. 2. Blow by is hot and so heats up the crankcase which has no great ac-

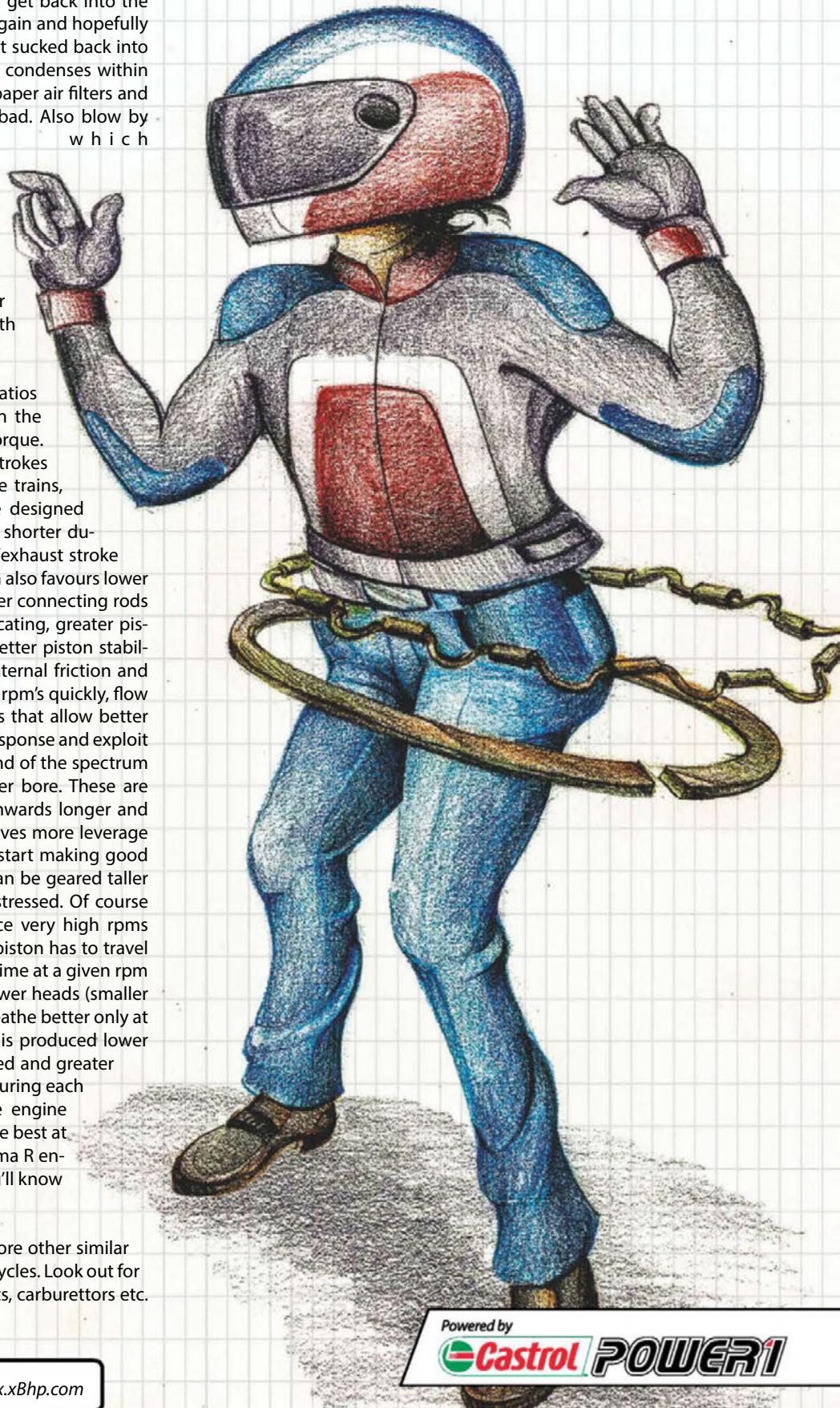
■ Diagram of Piston



cess to cooling. 3. Blow by forces an oil and unburnt fuel mist out of the crankcase vent. With modern engines the crankcase is vented into the air filter box (something called Exhaust Gas Recirculation or EGR) from where they get back into the combustion chamber to be burnt all over again and hopefully ejected out into the open. The gases do get sucked back into the engine but the oil mist, being heavier, condenses within the filter box making a soggy mess out of paper air filters and a gooey mess of sponge filters. Both are bad. Also blow by means more pressure beneath the piston which has to work harder to come down and so you lose on power. As a consolation to the majority of us using small displacement engines, the blow by problem is not that serious but if you own one of those big bore v-twins, blow by is serious and the sooner you react to oil in the air filter box, the better it will be for the health of both your bike's engine and your wallet.

No discussion on pistons and compression ratios would be complete without something on the relation between bore/stroke and power/torque. As a general rule wider bores and shorter strokes make power at higher rpm's. Yes, the valve trains, intake and exhaust ports etc. need to be designed pretty carefully to get the most out of the shorter duration of opening/closing of valves, intake/exhaust stroke and duration of combustion. But the design also favours lower piston weight, reduced piston speed, shorter connecting rods with less angular movement while reciprocating, greater piston skirt length relative to stroke and so better piston stability inside the bore – all of which reduce internal friction and increase engine life. Such engines also gain rpm's quickly, flow better (wider heads allow for bigger valves that allow better breathing even at high rpm's, have a crisp response and exploit close ratio gearboxes the best. The other end of the spectrum has engines with longer stroke and smaller bore. These are torquey – the gases push the piston downwards longer and the crankshaft has a longer throw which gives more leverage and so greater torque. Also such engines start making good amounts of torque at lower rpms and so can be geared taller making for an engine that feels pretty unstressed. Of course this design works best at lower rpms since very high rpms would mean very high piston speeds (the piston has to travel a longer distance on its stroke in the same time at a given rpm compared to a short stroke one), the narrower heads (smaller bore) allow smaller diameter valves that breathe better only at relatively lower rpms and peak power too is produced lower on the rpm scale. Also the high piston speed and greater angular movement of the connecting rod during each reciprocation would substantially increase engine wear and tear and so these engines work the best at low to mid-range rpms. Compare the Karizma R engine with that of the KTM Duke 200 and you'll know both ends of this spectrum.

This series of articles shall continue to explore other similar interesting elements of the world of motorcycles. Look out for stuff on spark plugs, drive chains, cam shafts, carburetors etc. in our subsequent issues. **xBhp**



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**xBhp rides the faired version of the successful
Gixxer 155 from Suzuki**

Text: Avinash Noronha (The Monk)

Photos: Sunil Gupta, Mohit Pal

[UN]Wrapped





There was a new toy in the house and like impatient children we waited to unwrap it. And it was a smart looking faired motorcycle. The Gixxer SF was launched recently by Suzuki, close on the heels of the Gixxer 155 in September 2014. The SF is essentially the Gixxer 155 (reviewed in the October 2014 issue) all wrapped up, and we were eager to unwrap this blue eyed beauty!

The bike we got was in the gorgeous Metallic Triton Blue, with graphics inspired from Suzuki's MotoGP bike, the GSX-RR. Homage paid to the return of the factory team to Grand Prix Racing in 2015. And the design doesn't disappoint. From the front, the bike looks BIG, with the full fairing giving it a purposeful look. The scoops next to the headlight and the fluorescent green sticker above add to the racy look. As you walk around, the looks get better, 'Suzuki' plastered on the side from the fuel tank to just below the indicators and at the base of the fairing gives it a 'track ready' appeal. The alloy rims get a strip of the same fluorescent green colour; this does draw your attention to the wheels and the beefy 41mm front forks as well. Move a little further back and the first disappointment walks in as you peek behind the fairing. There is sufficient space to see the 150cc motor wrapped up by the fairing, which just doesn't gel with the rest of the big bike look! Of course you soon realise that this is a 150 cc commuter/tourer and the great attire cannot substitute for lack of muscle underneath. As you go full circle around the bike, you notice the sculpted tank, with comfortable knee recesses, the stubby exhaust, the 140mm rear tyre and the single piece saddle, with the split grab rails neatly fused into the tail. The verdict for looks though is best measured at every traffic light. With people craning their necks to get a look at this awesome piece of Japanese machinery, the conclusion goes in favour of the bike being a looker! The same cannot be said about the other two colours it comes in, Glass Sparkle Black and Pearl Mirage White, which look rather plain Jane without the MotoGP inspired graphics.

Let not the full-fairing fool you though, a Yamaha R-15 competitor this is not. The Gixxer 155 targeted the FZ-S and raised the bar in the 150cc sports commuter segment; the SF similarly competes with the semi-faired Fazer. And as such, the bike comes with the same single cylinder air cooled 4-stroke engine which does duty on its naked sibling. The 154.9 cc engine produces a healthy 14.8Ps @ 8000 rpm and 14Nm @ 6000 rpm. The 5 speed carburetted bike doesn't just get an electric starter option but also comes with a kick-start, a boon for the tourer. Though the design of the kick-lever was not quite to my liking. The highlight of the Gixxer SF is the fairing though, which has been developed after extensive wind-tunnel testing in the facilities where the Hayabusa and GSX-1000 are developed. The quality is visible to the naked eye, as the fairing is rock steady and at no point does it feel flimsy or plasticky! What is truly unbelievable is that Suzuki has managed to restrict the increase in weight to a minuscule 4 kg over the Gixxer 155.

Last year we came away impressed with the Gixxer's riding capabilities and so were thinking if this wrapped up version be equally impressive? The key to the bike whets your appetite as it resembles that of the Hayabusa, with a tasteful chrome 'S' embossed onto the plastic. Slide the key into the ignition and switch it on as the console displays a welcome message 'Go Ready'. The console is also identical to the 155 and the fully digital dashboard displays the speedometer, odometer, tachometer, gear indicator, clock, two trip meters and fuel gauge. The tell-tale lights comprise of a gear-shift indicator, turn signal, neutral and high beam indicator. The tastefully done console is neatly nestled in the quality plastics, tucked away behind the visor. And as you look upwards from the visor the biggest eyesore on this motorcycle hits you. The mirrors. The RVMs on the fairing have extremely long stalks and coupled with the rather straight up riding posture, it feels so far ahead, as to belong to someone else's bike completely!

This Suzuki, like all its elder siblings, needs the clutch to be engaged, even while in neutral, for the bike to be started. A good habit that the rider will inculcate as he saves up for his dream superbike! The motor thrums to life with a slight touch of the starter button with nary a sound from the starter motor. Though as I realized the next morning, that is the case only on a warmed up engine. Otherwise every morning it is a ritual need to engage the choke to start the engine, yes even when the day temperatures in Delhi hit 40+ deg C. Rev the engine in neutral and you hear the lovely sound of the Suzuki motor as it eggs you to get a move on. And that is exactly what we did, as it was finally time to ride...





Engage the light clutch and slot the bike into first gear and let the good times roll. The bike immediately feels natural to the rider, who doesn't feel the need to 'adapt' to it. As I faced the traffic of a metro city, I went into commuter mode, taking things slow and easy getting a feel of the motorcycle. But it just didn't click. Something was missing, what I couldn't quite put my finger on. As I brooded over this lack of excitement waiting at the traffic light, I forgot about the commuter mode as soon as the lights turned green. And I pushed the bike a bit and then some more. It was then that it struck me; this motorcycle does not like to be ridden slow! Grab it by the scruff of its neck and throw it around like a rag doll and it will happily comply with your every command. Flicking the bike through gaps, braking hard for an overcooked corner and generally having a ball of a time is what this bike wants to do. But on the other hand, first gear start-stop traffic is a pain with those Extra Terrestrial antennas aka RVMs sticking out like the proverbial sore thumb. It takes some time to get used to the fact that you can't fit through the gap that you should fit through. This problem comes to the fore again when parking in tight spots, as the mirrors have to be folded in or else your neighbour might accidentally take them home!



The footpegs are a tad bit rear set and the bars make you lean forward ever so slightly, ensuring that you are sitting pretty for a long day's ride. Not too aggressive or commuterish. The windscreens though felt too tiny, as it didn't stop the wind from hitting me at speed, though the RVMs show no vibration or buzz even when you redline this bike in all gears. The engine has enough punch to pull the rider and bike at a fair clip, though high speed overtakes are tricky, since there is not much juice left north of 80kmph. Get off the gas for a moment and downshifting is necessary as rolling acceleration doesn't get the job done. The lack of grunt is sufficiently made up by the sweet handling; very instinctive, you can look and it will follow your visual path. Never for a moment one feels like wrestling the bike into a corner. Just think and it will happen. Though cornering on this bike is not a bed of roses, the thorn in the flesh being the foot-pegs, scraping the tarmac at even those minor lean angles that a dyed in the wool tourer like me would attempt. Not something I expected.

Braking is a mixed affair with the front Bybre disc giving good feedback and is progressive, allowing the rider to brake as hard and late as his skills allow, though the story at the rear is different. The drum brakes just don't cut it and I hope Suzuki will give a disc at the rear, at least as an option. Turning the bike is easy, with mid corner corrections and bumps posing no problems at all. The MRF tyres do a wonderful job of keeping the rider rubber side down even on gravel and dirt. And as we realized on the wet roads of Lavasa with the 155, even rain doesn't hamper the fun quotient. The suspension on the bike is firm and is not for those looking for extreme comfort, which is not to say it isn't comfortable but just that it is built for spirited riding. And as such the rider can accelerate, brake, corner and move around in the saddle with the bike maintaining its composure. Another interesting thing to note is that the Ground Clearance remains the same at 160 mm between the faired and naked Gixxers. This is good news for tourers who might find themselves travelling on bad or no roads.





Though we had the bike just for a few days, it would appear that living with it should be a pleasure, though a few minor irritants do exist. Parking is an issue with those far reaching RVMs. The fuel knob is nicely tucked in the bodywork; it looks good but difficult to access with gloved hands. The fuel tank cap does not get a hinge and the entire lock unit needs to be removed for refuelling. The pillion seat is not the most comfortable around in the market. I do sometimes wonder why the present day motorcycle manufacturers are so against pillion comfort! The headlight is 35W which is adequate for the city, but not so for a highway spin. Though the 12 litre fuel tank coupled with an expected fuel efficiency of 45kmpl should give it a wonderful range for touring at speeds of 80-100 kmph comfortably.



The Suzuki Gixxer SF is priced at Rs. 94238/- On Road Delhi for the metallic triton blue, which is almost 11 grand more than the Gixxer 155, which is a large amount for a fairing! Is the excess monies charged worth it? That depends on your love for faired bikes. There is no other full-faired bike below a lakh, which gives youngsters a chance to own a well-built motorcycle which looks gorgeous to boot! **BBP**



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE

Type – 4 Stroke, 1 cylinder, Air cooled
Valve System – SOHC, 2 Valve
Displacement – 154.9cc
Bore x Stroke – 56.0mm x 62.9mm
Power – 14.8ps @8000rpm
Torque – 14Nm @ 6000rpm

DIMENSION

LxWxH – 2050x785x1085 mm
Wheel Base – 1,330mm
Ground Clearance – 160mm
Seat Height – 780mm
Kerb Weight – 139 kg
Fuel Tank Capacity – 12 Lt.

BRAKE

Front – Single Disc
Rear – Drum

SUSPENSION

Front – Telescopic
Rear – Swing Arm, Mono Suspension

TYRE SIZE

Front – 100/80-17 Tubeless
Rear – 140/60R-17 Tubeless

PRICE – 94238/- On Road Delhi



Three Cyclists pedal to Parashar Lake in the snow, braving the cold

Text: Dhanush K Dev

Photos: Sanoj Vazhiyodan, Rohit Kalyana and Dhanush K Dev

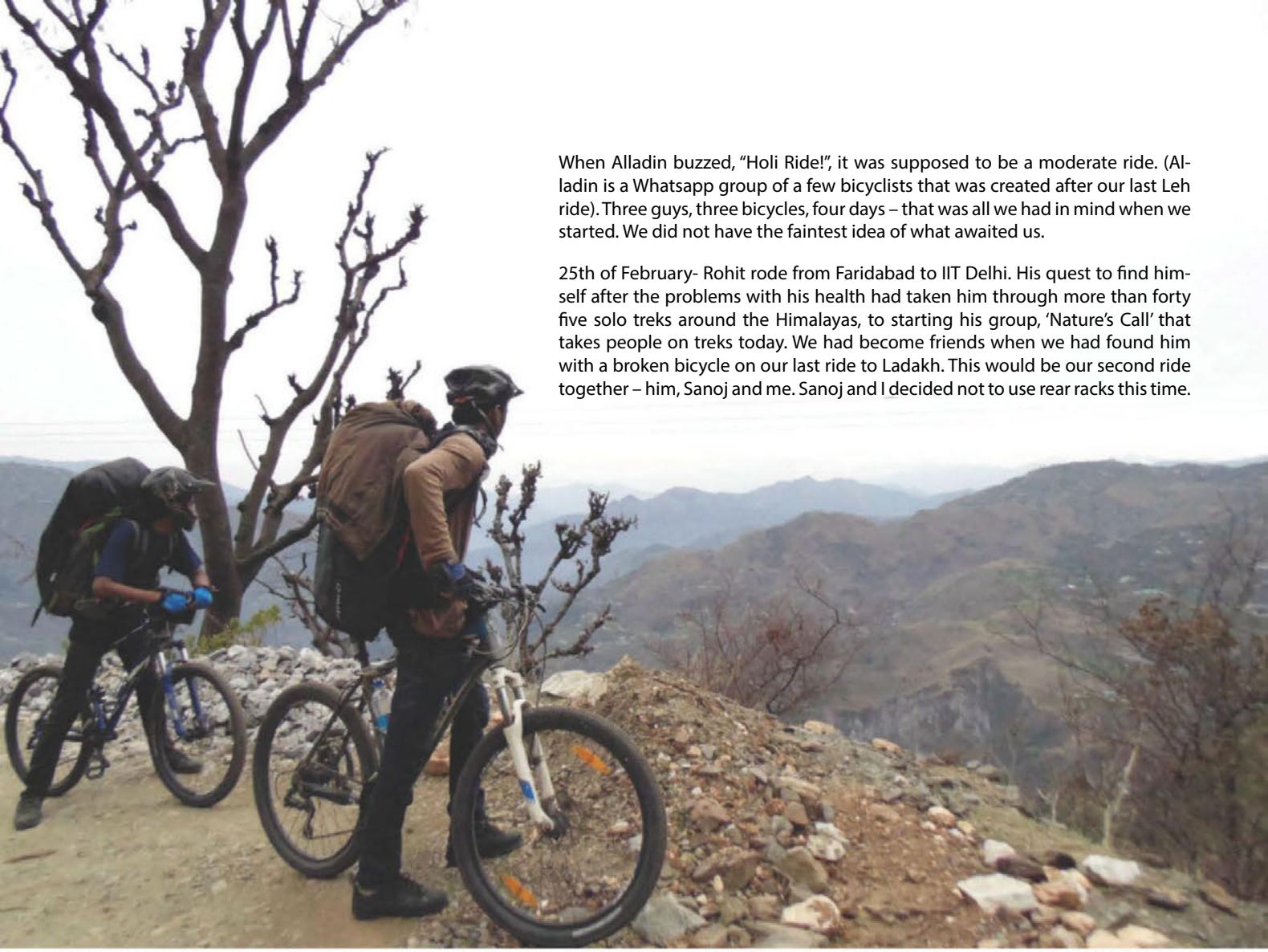




INTO THE WHITE

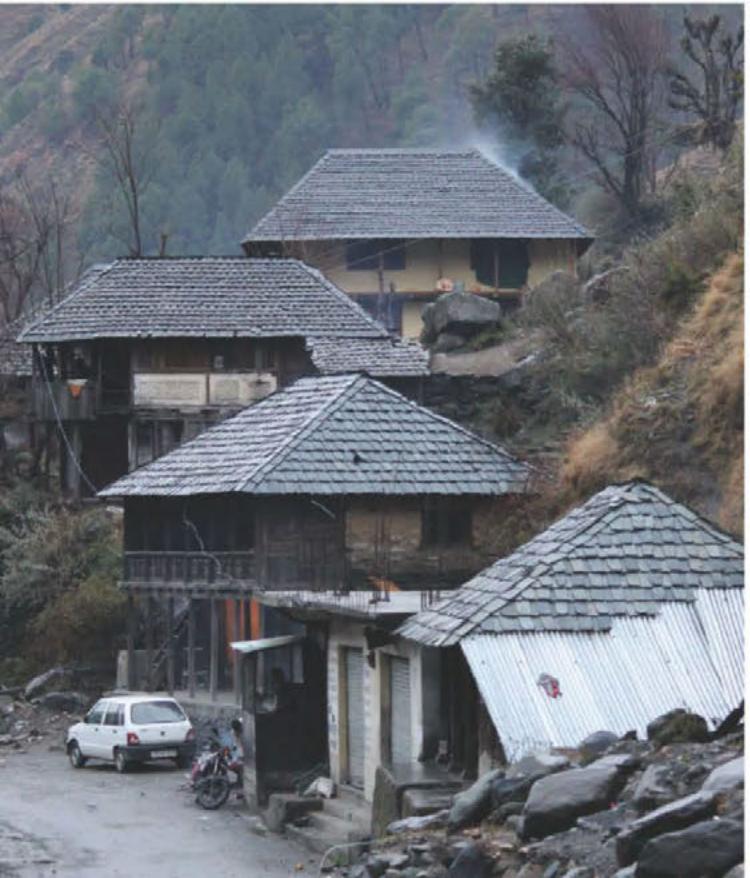
“It’s when you give yourself to travel, bare, battered; life reveals herself in all her grandeur, for an enchanted, awakened you.”

We had come far. The snow had gotten heavier and the winds numbing. It was getting dark. Visibility reduced to almost zero. The ascent had brought us through more than a couple of hairpin turns, through our fears of the unknown. Pushing our bicycles through the snow, “push, push harder...” was all that kept ringing in our heads. And there I was some twenty seven hundred meters above sea level, standing grounded, astounded. My spirit shuddered witnessing the mountains’ stirring revelation. In a moment, the clouds rolled away, the skies cleared, hues changed, as the mountains appeared on the great white canvas. Patches of replenished green had survived the long snowfall. Drenched in the subtle yellow tinge of happiness, it was the reward of contentment. This time I was on the other mountain- the whiter side. Ten minutes of impassioned drama had left me awed beyond comprehension, beyond exclamation. We looked at each other, tucked our high hearts underneath our mirth and said, “Dinkan is great!” (Dinkan is the super rat from Kerala, who had made his way from children’s comics to satirical theistic – atheistic debates)



When Alladin buzzed, "Holi Ride!", it was supposed to be a moderate ride. (Alladin is a Whatsapp group of a few bicyclists that was created after our last Leh ride). Three guys, three bicycles, four days – that was all we had in mind when we started. We did not have the faintest idea of what awaited us.

25th of February- Rohit rode from Faridabad to IIT Delhi. His quest to find himself after the problems with his health had taken him through more than forty five solo treks around the Himalayas, to starting his group, 'Nature's Call' that takes people on treks today. We had become friends when we had found him with a broken bicycle on our last ride to Ladakh. This would be our second ride together – him, Sanoj and me. Sanoj and I decided not to use rear racks this time.





We carried our bags on our backs. All buckled up, bikes loaded onto the roof of the bus, we started our journey from Kashmiri Gate to Mandi. Barely sleeping, we reached Mandi around 5 the next morning. At a nice road side dhaba awesome parathas rejuvenated our excitement after that tiring bus ride. The morning couldn't be better. Suddenly, Sanoj pointed out that his winter clothes were missing! Excited, I forgot the bag of winter clothes I was to carry. But the good news was, we lost a few kilos! It was a lesson we learnt - on a ride like this, towels, toothbrushes, and extra underwear are mostly never needed. We packed minimum, and now we were moving with half of that! But as we climbed the hills, we couldn't care less. The weather was pleasant. Occasionally we would pass milkmen waving at us as

they descended on their bicycles. Close mountains, long tracks, welcoming smiles of the locals – it was euphoria. We were making up songs and singing, "Round – round – round, Oh Tanga-langa-la!"

It had been some six hours into the merry ride. The road till then had been uphill. Suddenly in front of us lay a stretch of a winding downhill road. The joy of downhilling lasted just four kilometres as we landed on an almost level stretch going onto a wooden bridge. As we rode over the gushing waters of Kamand, we saw three small idols carved out of stone atop a pillar. Local beliefs had washed the idols red in sindoor, as they stood still atop the pillar. Sounds of the rushing stream with the ironic stillness of the red idols filled the air





with mysticism. I halted. For a moment I was bridged across generations who had walked these mountains. As we continued, we came across a little restaurant. It was past eleven and we were hungry. As we went in I noticed that everything, from biscuits to cakes, was branded 'Parashar'. Our destination felt closer! We had a few omelettes hoping to have lunch at Bagi and finishing the ride by evening. It was afternoon and we were still far from Bagi. At a small village called Katola we halted as we were tired. We knew we couldn't ride for long. We had to get supplies for the night – biscuits, cakes and some pakoras. We continued to Bagi. It was another six kilometres and the rain was getting heavier. We knew we had to stay back at Bagi for the night. We rode slowly revelling in what the mountains had to offer. The rain had washed the place spectacularly. Scattered, small huts and grazing sheep dotted the hills, while the earth smelt of life – beautiful, unpredictable, colours blurred into the distant rains. On mountains with rains like that, salty potato chips get really tasty.



We were halting frequently eating, laughing.

We reached Bagi around five. The rain had ceased. A few locals were gathered around a fire by the roadside. Drawn by the comfort warmth, we joined them. As we spoke, they told us how the streams Enroute get violent, how the snow gets heavy and slippery, and why rides like ours should be avoided! We had come far and with no intention of returning. We handed our luggage to the locals and they showed us an abandoned bus stop to camp for the night. Tucked in comfortably inside our tent, we spoke for hours, savouring our pakodas. Drawn by the warmth of the tent, three dogs had settled down around it. It is amazing how you meet strangers and end up owing them. The dogs guarded us through the night. We gave a share of our pakodas to our new found friends and slept off.

We woke up early to get back on the road. It was still drizzling. Standing outside the small bus stop, I stared at the two roads. Both led to Parashar. One went into a beautiful pine forest and vanished into a thin trail. If you are trekking up to Parashar, this is the trail you take, through the majestic forest. The other road led to a broken stone

bridge flung across by the torrential stream. The stream then knee deep flowed over the broken trail, rushing past me. This was the cycling track! We breakfasted at a nearby shop, clicked a few photos, and left Bagi. We found a way to go around the broken bridge without walking through the stream. Back on the road again, we rode uphill with revived spirits. A few hours later the rain got heavier, and the streams got bigger, relentless. As the winding road took us higher, the mist got heavier. We were riding the peaks of the mountains, above the clouds that rolled fast in the distance. Sometimes a little wandering cloud would pass by stroking my skin, soaking me in. Pine trees grew animatedly straight through plains and slopes that were now cliffs. Trees flowed like waterfalls, conifers blooming in vibrant red reminding me of those flowers back home. Nostalgia, wonder, delight, had uplifted us, evoking emotions I didn't know of. And probably the cold played its part too! We had cold feet and needed to stop. It was around one in the afternoon, we came across a closed down dhaba. We ran towards the porch, removed our shoes, and started pacing up and down the veranda. We tried push ups, and almost anything that could warm us up. We needed fire. Trying to warm up, I explored the dhaba. I saw an abandoned cowshed nearby. Hoping to find fire-

wood, we went inside. Broke a plank, found hay, and soon we had a little fire going. Cold and soaked outside, the warmth of the fire within the dark broken shed felt like heaven. The warmth, delicious cakes, and friends, carried us away to our old memories of mountains and treks, and we realized, it was already three thirty. We had been basking in the comfort for two hours! The fire had revived our spirits; enthusiasm beat in our hearts again, as we got back on the road. We got out of the shed, and saw for the first time – it was snowing. The washed out mountains had softened into the romance of misty green-white sceneries. Flakes of snow were falling softly, floating, blanketing the mountains in soft shades of snow white. The road was covered in patches of thick snow and slushy ice. Adrenaline rushed through my body. Our grins could hardly contain our enthusiasm - we were thrilled. We rode slowly over the slushy, slippery ice. Cutting through thick patches of ice was almost impossible. As we rode uphill through steeper tracks, the pine trees around us got denser. Loaded in snow, the trees made way for a pine forest. The place was cast into an ethereal landscape of shades of grey as the trees shaded and snow spread drawing dreamy forms all around. We were riding through a dreamy meditative world, halting frequently, trying to capture these moments in our cameras. It had been two hours; we reached the point in the trail where there was no trail anymore, just thick white snow blanketing everything we could see. We pushed through, making our own trail. It was five thirty in the evening and getting dark. We had eaten everything we had. The cold was biting as our gloves were wet. All I saw was the vast expanse of snow covering everything that lay in front of me- without any trail or life. We looked at each other, panic was setting in. As it got windier, we walked, pushing our bikes through the snow. We clung onto dear hope. We kept saying, "Push... push harder", that kept repeating in our heads. We thought of leaving our bikes there and walk. But





that didn't sound good. We decided to push till the first hairpin visible in the horizon. We reached. The vast expanse of white snow continued to one more hairpin. We pushed forward to the next turn...and the next. It had been three hairpins already. We saw nothing but white snow all around. Visibility reduced to zero. The cold was biting, wind numbing, and we were exhausted. We were just three tired men, pushing their bicycles into the great white mountains, not knowing how far could they go. Pushing slowly through the snow, through the silence, only tired words were occasionally heard - "Are you tired?". The last three kilometres, pushing through snow had consumed us. It was dusk. We had reached one more hairpin. We pushed a few more meters, and suddenly out of the heavy mist appeared a yellow board perched atop the mountain. We had almost reached our destination! Scuffling towards the board, we saw the shadow of a firm mountain man against the dusky skies, staring at us from the ridge above the road. He was the first life we had seen in kilometres. Sanoj started waving at him frantically. The man went back somewhere. As we reached the board, it read Parashar, we saw him running down to receive us. We could see the rest house where this man lived- our saviour. He quickly took our bags and asked us to follow him into the rest house. As I moved towards the rest house, something strange happened. The clouds rolled away, the mist



cleared, and before me lay the grand mountains, white and green, merging into the horizon. The setting sun shone for the first time, spreading its last rays of warmth, reflecting on the snow, revealing a world of rugged white mountains and pensive green forests. This was the whiter side- cold but tender. Struggling with words for appreciation, and exclamation, we said, "Dinkan is great!" In ten minutes, like culminating into a climax, the world was washed anew. I walked up to the rest house content and joyful.

The saviour was Roop Singh- caretaker of the rest house. He had been with the forest department for years, moving from mountain to mountain around the Himalayas. He made a fire, helped us dry off as we got rid of our wet clothes. At dinner, we talked for long. Nibbling the awesome papad, we were arrested in Roop Singh's amazing stories of treks and life in the mountains. Hours later, we slept in one of the big cosy wooden rooms of the rest house. Chunks of ice and snow kept falling from the roof outside, sometimes making sounds that would scare us - sounds like an avalanche rolling down. We woke up early the next morning. It was sunny. We had to trek one

kilometre to the Parashar Lake. Watching the first footprints in the immaculate, pure, white snow, as we walked was reviving that old spirit, to go find new places, that we all had when we were kids. As we reached the place, it was ethereal. Snow had covered everything, other than the lake. Basking in the morning sun, everything laid still, soft and white. The temple was almost dug under the snow. Revealing the roofs of a few other huts, snow had carved out a dreamy landscape. The clear waters of the lake reflected the Parrish blue sky-I had fallen in love with the place. We came back after playing in the snow excitedly for a few hours. Roop Singh had made a nice breakfast for us. We had breakfast, bid bye to our saviour, and left Parashar.

Pushing back was easy. We were moving back fast through the tracks we had cut through the snow while we had come up. We saw the footprints of a small animal, probably a dog or fox that had followed our tracks. An hour later we were riding down. As I tried to live through this surreally beautiful world one last time, I looked back and saw - the place had owned me! **xBhp**





AXOR

HELMETS

MADE IN ITALY
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xBhp Rides and Reviews the latest premium commuter motorcycle from Honda.

Text: Avinash Noronha (The Monk)

Photos: Sunil Gupta and Mohit Pal



The Unicorn is a mythical animal which looks somewhat like a horse. But the Honda Unicorn in the last decade has been as real as it gets in the Indian motorcycle market. A premium 150cc commuter motorcycle, this bike has brought in the numbers for the company. After all these years, it was time for it to get a shot in the arm and the Japanese giant have done just that by launching the CB Unicorn 160, building on the legacy of its predecessors with a fresh design. 'Looks Good, Is Good' is the title given by Honda for this motorcycle. Does the bike live up to the expectations and promises, let's find out.

Visually the Unicorn has been handled very smartly, enough basic visual cues brought over from the original motorcycle, yet sufficient styling changes to stand apart. The large fan base will at once be comfortable and excited with the new bike. From the front the headlight looks good flanked by the clear lens turn indicators and the compact tank shrouds. And one happily notices the existence of a pilot lamp as well. Walk to the side of the bike and the same headlamp doesn't look good, it gives an impression of a snubbed nose. The bike has elegant lines running through it with no unnecessary graphics to take away from the simplicity of the machine. The side panels in black also add a nice touch to its looks. The H-shaped tail lamp stands out nicely, ensuring that you recognize this model. The exhaust has a nice compact stubby design and on the other side the saree guard is one of the best designed in the market. Unlike other bikes, this saree guard has been neatly integrated into the design to give both form and function. The other things which stand out are the bright red sparkplug cover and Honda in a similar shade of red emblazoned on the completely black engine unit. This is the premium part of the motorcycle, once you notice the straight tall handlebars, covered chain, heel-toe shifter, single long saddle and the one piece grab rail; the commuter spirit of the motorcycle becomes evident. The bike looks good in a minimalist manner in isolation, but nothing that you would remember an hour later in a crowd.

THE WORK HORSE





The full digital console that the Unicorn sports gives out all the necessary information clearly, properly organized and without any clutter. Speedo, tacho, odo, two trip metres, clock and fuel level indicator are what you find on this digital display, along with the tell-tale lights above it. The console is easy to read in bright sunlight as well as at night, with the backlit display doing its job properly. But as nice as the console looks, the switchgear is that mediocre. Switches are slightly hard and there is once again no engine kill switch. Also, to refuel one need remove the entire fuel lock assembly as there is no hinge to just flip over.

Once you place your posterior on the extremely soft saddle, things start looking up once again. A gentle touch of the starter button immediately brings the 163cc engine to life with no sound of the starter cranking the engine. The engine has a nice raspy sound and settles into a steady idle. After the engine has warmed up the engine revs freely in neutral, but feels chocked as it redlines. The mill shares the same bore with



the Trigger and Unicorn 150 and the stroke has been increased to 63mm from 57.8mm, making it an undersquare engine, thus helping it increase peak torque from 12.5Nm in the Trigger to 14.61 Nm at 500 revs earlier, even though the peak power sees a very marginal increase. This difference on paper becomes very apparent as you ride the bike in traffic or with a pillion, the engine pulls cleanly without feeling stressed. The new engine also gets a counter balancer which helps make the already smooth Honda engine even smoother. To ensure the engine runs cooler and thus reduce engine fatigue, the crankcase gets cooling fins on it along with multiple changes within not visible to the rider.

Enough with the idling around, it was time to ride and get a feel of things. Pull in the extremely light clutch (too light for my liking) and slot it into gear with a firm click and get off the blocks comfortably which makes city stop and go traffic a breeze. The low end and mid-range torque makes the bike ideal for urban warfare reducing the need to regularly downshift. The throttle response is crisp with no lag apparent while accelerating through traffic. This does come with a trade-off though; power at the top is sacrificed as the bike feels breathless when you try to stretch its legs. Shifting through the gears, both up and down is butter smooth, but clutchless shifts are not a great idea, as the motorcycle protests such sporty activity! For those interested in using this bike for touring, the bike is happy cruising between 80-100 without feeling stressed, but anything beyond that and it is far too much of a struggle to bother. For the city dwellers, the lack of an engine kill switch is infuriating and you tend to stall the bike at traffic signals to shut off the engine rather than turning the key. The silver lining is that it starts in gear with the clutch pulled in!

The biggest strength of this motorcycle lies in its handling. At 135 kg it is 11kg lighter than the Unicorn 150, and this shows once you are on the move. The bike is light, flickable and can easily be turned on a dime. The suspension is plush absorbing all the bumps on the road barring the extremely large potholes. Throw the bike into a corner and if you don't like your line, you can easily make mid-corner corrections to find that new gap in traffic without breaking a sweat. The suspension does not feel ruffled even when you hit that odd bump while leaned over. The 17 inch wheels, rear mono-shock and narrow width tyres all contribute towards making this a commute friendly



bike. The handling has been so well sorted out that even the weight of a pillion doesn't deter you from flicking the bike around. The rider feels as if doesn't need the brakes, he could just manoeuvre around any obstacle! Coming to the brakes, the front wheel is equipped with Nissin callipers which do a good job of bringing the bike to a halt in a hurry, even though the lever needs a firm pull and it is not a one finger affair. The rear brake is a drum and one doesn't get a disc even as an option on the Unicorn 160.

Comfortable commuting is the mantra for this Honda which is apparent from its riding ergonomics. Forward set footpegs, upright handlebar, long single piece saddle and heel-toe shifter ensure that you are super comfortable riding in the city. Sportiness will not be visible anywhere in your daily commute. One problem which I faced was that the saddle was too soft, okay for short rides but spending upwards of an hour on it and it starts getting uncomfortable. The fuel knob on the side looks good and is integrated nicely into the bodywork, but is difficult to switch with gloved hands. The rear view mirrors allow you ample view of the traffic behind you. Even the side stand is easy to locate with clumsy motorcycle boots, though the rear brake pedal does not have a rubber covering and could be possibly slippery while riding in the wet for an average commuter. The 35W headlight is adequate for city riding, but nothing to write home about, as it dims with full electrical load. The sparkplug is easily accessible for regular maintenance but there is no window for checking engine oil level. The turn signal indicators are bright and clearly visible at all times and for those who need to lug stuff around, there are sufficient mounting points to make travelling hassle free.

The Honda CB Unicorn 160 is an improvement in almost all aspects over its previous iteration and does a wonderful job of getting the rider around from one place to another in comfort and safety. This is a bike perfect for the average commuter who wants a workhorse that will never let him down. A no frills bike whose performance is not a myth but a given and constant, the perfect workhorse for the typical commuter. **XBlip**





ENGINE

Type – Air cooled, 4 stroke, SI engine
Displacement – 162.71cc
Max net power – 14.5bhp @ 8000rpm
Max net torque – 14.61Nm @ 6000rpm
Bore – 57.3mm
Stroke – 63mm
Compression ratio – 10:01



FRAME AND SUSPENSION

Frame type – Diamond
Front suspension – Telescopic
Rear suspension – Spring loaded hydraulic type (monoshock)



TYRES SIZE

Tyre size (Front) – 80/100-17 (Tubeless)
Tyre size (Rear) – 110/80-17 (Tubeless)



PRICE (Ex-showroom Delhi)

Standard Rs. 72376/-,
CBS Rs. 77632/-



DIMENSIONS

Length – 2045mm
Width – 757mm
Height – 1060mm
Wheelbase – 1324 mm
Ground Clearance – 150mm
Kerb weight – (std135kg)(CBS 136kg)
Fuel tank capacity – 12L



BRAKE

Brake type (Front) – Disc 240mm
Brake type (rear) – Drum 130mm (CBS)

We speak to a biker who likes to get his hands dirty as he does extensive modifications on his Harley Davidson Superlow

Photos: Dushyant Singh Tomar

Dusyant
SUPER CUSTOM



Dushyant Singh Tomar better known as Dustom99 (DST99) in the virtual world has always had a penchant for building and rebuilding his machines. His habit going back to the days where he used to ride a Royal Enfield which would regularly break down! Being schooled in the field of mechanical engineering and pursuing a career in the same, he finally built two insane motorcycles from the ground up. Recently he got a Harley Davidson Superlow and decided to have fun tinkering with it. We get to know about this beast directly from the horse's mouth!

xBhp - Your thoughts about the Harley in its stock form.

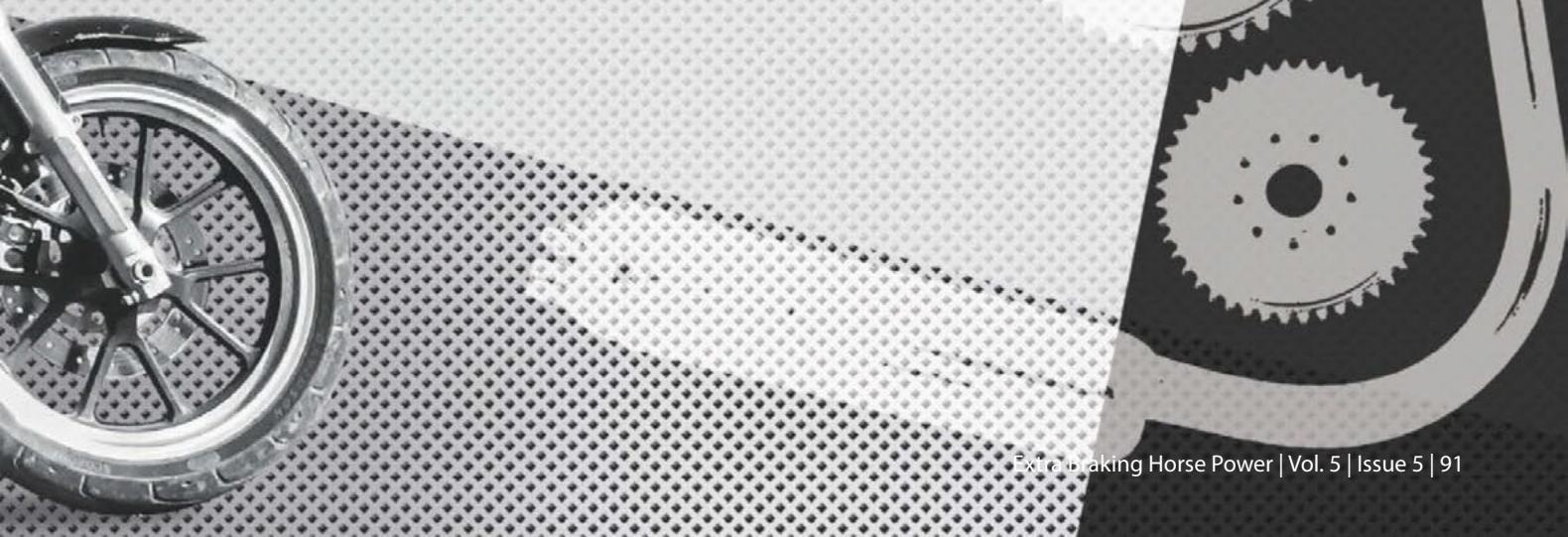
DST99: For me, Harley Davidsons in its basic form are no frill motorcycles. They are made with craftsmanship and love. For example, you will find seamless, corner less curvy tanks only on Harleys. Others have moved on to seam welding upper and lower half of gas tanks. It's easy to manufacture and costs less, but leaves an ugly seam of resistance weld along the periphery. Harley has stuck to TIG welding because that's how a curvy tank should be, despite it being labour intensive. They have loads of billet aluminium machined parts, while others have changed over, welding smaller sheet metal components together to form a complex part.

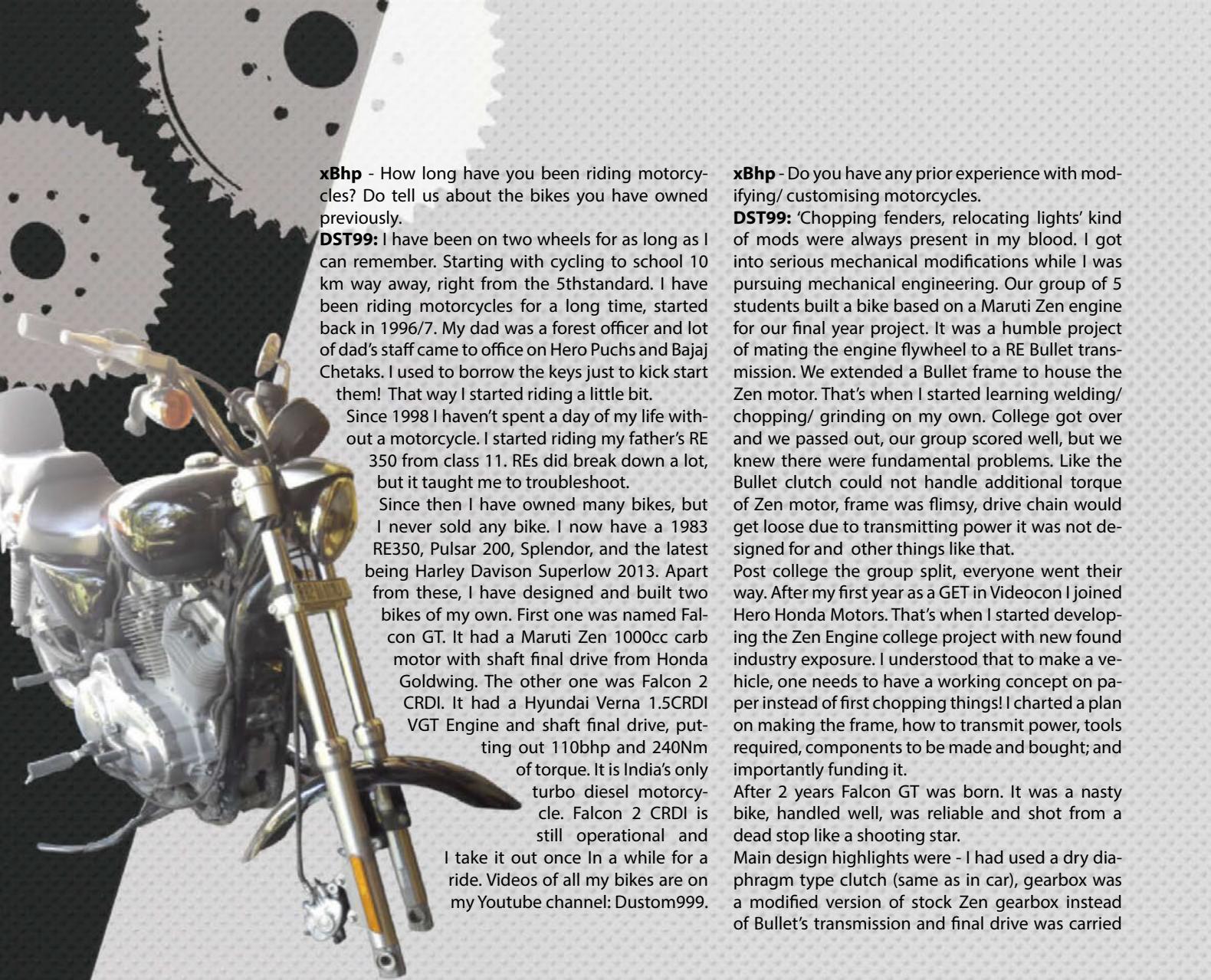
Automobile manufacturers classify various areas of a vehicle into different zones; areas that are hidden from view are not finished as well as others. A-Class areas have the best fit and finish, then the B-Class areas and then C and D. On a Harley every part has the same finish. If you find shiny chrome on the surface, chrome within will also be top quality. These small things set Harley apart.

They have kept the joy of motorcycling alive by connecting with the rider. I believe motorcycling appeals to men because of the dangers involved. Men like hunting, football, racing, boxing; these sports are exciting because they pose a certain danger. There is a hero in all of us, and we all love winning after encountering hurdles. A win without risks, danger and fear is forgotten very soon. Harley Davidson has kept that excitement alive by making raw torque laden engines, negligible vibration damping, audible sounds of components, and then that exhaust note!

I could go on about that Exhaust note, but I will try in few words. Just like a new born connects to certain sounds around him; he knows the sounds that make him happy and frightened. Similarly the sound of a Harley immediately connects to riders.

Some riders do not like Harleys. I respect their take. They say it vibrates, harsh suspension, very old tech push rod engines etc. Others have pushed the boundaries of comfort, power, NVH and selling motorcycles that are plush and comfortable. But at the same time they have taken out the joy of motorcycling. The Danger is gone. Some like that idea, not me. These days' lots of people are buying motorcycles after driving around in air conditioned cars with plush leather seats for decades. They get themselves a motorcycle just because they can. They want a motorcycle because it is the 'IN' thing! Motorcycles are desirable because they are associated with a certain macho image. But why were they associated with this macho image in the first place? Because they were dangerous and not everybody could ride one. Harley is a pretty basic and unadulterated motorcycle. It's a powerful torque laden good old motorcycle. Just like it should be!





xBhp - How long have you been riding motorcycles? Do tell us about the bikes you have owned previously.

DST99: I have been on two wheels for as long as I can remember. Starting with cycling to school 10 km way away, right from the 5th standard. I have been riding motorcycles for a long time, started back in 1996/7. My dad was a forest officer and lot of dad's staff came to office on Hero Puchs and Bajaj Chetaks. I used to borrow the keys just to kick start them! That way I started riding a little bit.

Since 1998 I haven't spent a day of my life without a motorcycle. I started riding my father's RE 350 from class 11. REs did break down a lot, but it taught me to troubleshoot.

Since then I have owned many bikes, but I never sold any bike. I now have a 1983 RE350, Pulsar 200, Splendor, and the latest being Harley Davison Superlow 2013. Apart from these, I have designed and built two bikes of my own. First one was named Falcon GT. It had a Maruti Zen 1000cc carb motor with shaft final drive from Honda Goldwing. The other one was Falcon 2 CRDI. It had a Hyundai Verna 1.5CRDI VGT Engine and shaft final drive, putting out 110bhp and 240Nm of torque. It is India's only

turbo diesel motorcycle. Falcon 2 CRDI is still operational and

I take it out once in a while for a ride. Videos of all my bikes are on my YouTube channel: Dustom999.

xBhp - Do you have any prior experience with modifying/ customising motorcycles.

DST99: 'Chopping fenders, relocating lights' kind of mods were always present in my blood. I got into serious mechanical modifications while I was pursuing mechanical engineering. Our group of 5 students built a bike based on a Maruti Zen engine for our final year project. It was a humble project of mating the engine flywheel to a RE Bullet transmission. We extended a Bullet frame to house the Zen motor. That's when I started learning welding/ chopping/ grinding on my own. College got over and we passed out, our group scored well, but we knew there were fundamental problems. Like the Bullet clutch could not handle additional torque of Zen motor, frame was flimsy, drive chain would get loose due to transmitting power it was not designed for and other things like that.

Post college the group split, everyone went their way. After my first year as a GET in Videocon I joined Hero Honda Motors. That's when I started developing the Zen Engine college project with new found industry exposure. I understood that to make a vehicle, one needs to have a working concept on paper instead of first chopping things! I charted a plan on making the frame, how to transmit power, tools required, components to be made and bought; and importantly funding it.

After 2 years Falcon GT was born. It was a nasty bike, handled well, was reliable and shot from a dead stop like a shooting star.

Main design highlights were - I had used a dry diaphragm type clutch (same as in car), gearbox was a modified version of stock Zen gearbox instead of Bullet's transmission and final drive was carried



over from Honda Goldwing GL 1800. The frame was made of CR-moly steel tubes and were bent on proper race car roll cage bending machine. Meanwhile I had honed my MIG and TIG welding skills as well. It was a very cool and innovative hobby to have but at the same time expensive as well! All this led to the making of Falcon 2 CRDI and then further into engine mods and suspension mods on my Superlow 883.

xBhp - What made you decide to customize your bike?

DST99: Unlike the majority who want a custom bike to look different from the herd, I have always focussed on functional modifications. Most things I do only if I need it. It is more like a challenge to me in the field of mechanical engineering. A win is sweet but a defeat is painful and can even be fatal. Once again I repeat myself, it's the dangers involved that gets me going. I would not advise anyone to undertake mechanical modifications on their vehicles unless they are confident that they are a good mechanical engineer and understand stress, material, forces and vibrations.

Mine was a Superlow and I loved it to the core but grinding the bottom of it on all speed bumps was irritating. That 100mm Ground Clearance (GC) was too low. I enquired with fellow HOGS on how were they coping with this and found out that half of them had accepted it and were helpless as they didn't want to spend 50 grand to get 130mm GC. The other half had upgraded to either an HD front end from some other model or used aftermarket stuff.

For some time I could not decide which camp to join, meanwhile I got an idea of fabricating a pair of adapters to be used on the front forks. That extended the fork length and gave me additional 30-40mm of clearance. Damn! If it was that simple, why wasn't anyone else doing it? Was there a problem I was overlooking? I spent a few days brooding over the issue. Researched all over the internet, every possible forum. I could not find this solution being employed to raise the bike. It was clear that most people in USA wanted to lower their bikes. Few who wanted to raise it for off-road purposes had various aftermarket options on longer forks available at reasonable prices. So I finally went ahead and designed a pair for myself. Installed them for a trial on my bike. And they have never been removed since, 20000 km and counting!

Initially I only wanted more GC, but the raised front end not just looked good, but gave massively improved

handling and lean angles as well. Stock Superlow can lean just about 28 degrees, while I have leaned as much as 37 degrees and lean angles of 34 degrees are an everyday affair now. Few friends and fellow HOGS also tried my motorcycle and liked what I was talking about. So risers designed by me have been in service on at least 5 documented 883s and cumulative kilometres are now over 80k! I have also shipped a couple of riser sets which I am not tracking. The Game of Custom HD had begun!

xBhp - How did you go about customising your bike?

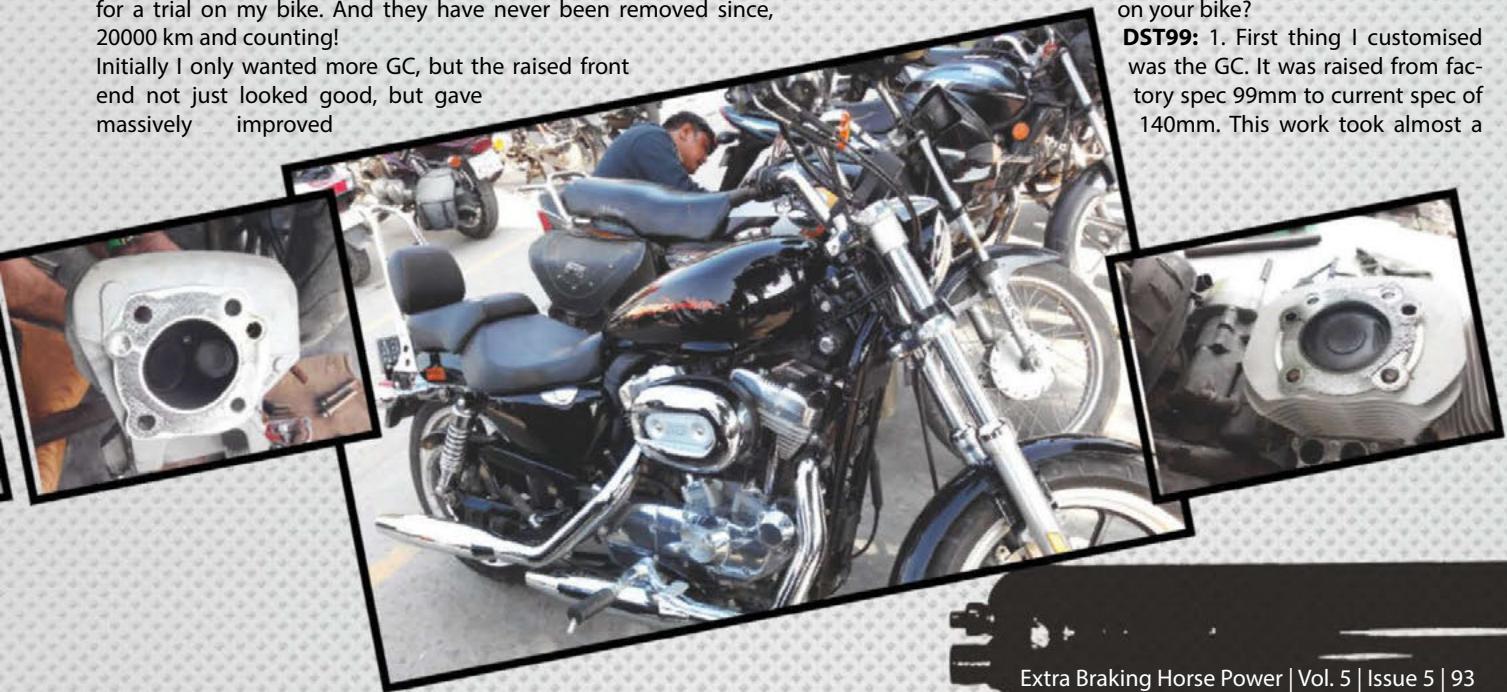
DST99: On the engine upgrades:-

I have always wanted a big powerful motor between my legs; I got used to the 883 and its power delivery and wanted more. Well, irrespective of the power you have, everyone always wants more. So I started researching.

Stage 1- Changing exhaust to a lower restriction one and air filter to a free flowing. Just after 4 months of ownership, I wanted a louder exhaust like everyone else. On enquiries about HD exhaust and other aftermarket ones, I decided to buy the V&H. But it needed to be shipped from USA and would take a month at least. In the interim I de-baffled my stock exhaust; removed them, took the mufflers to a lathe shop, machined their baffle ends and de-baffled them. When I remounted them on my bike, the first thing I did was cancel my V&H order. I didn't care if the V&H were better or worse, I loved what I had found on the de-baffled stock exhaust. The motorcycle had some improvement in high RPM response as well. I was pretty happy. But I had made it a little too free flowing and I was getting detonation issues due to the lean mixture. That's when I entered Harley EFI tuning and electronics. Money that was saved from the aftermarket exhaust was put down into Dynojet Power Vision Flash tuner. I started playing with few parameters of fuel delivery and Ignition timing. What I didn't know I consulted with people from automobile industry. Soon I was riding a powerful motorcycle as compared to what had landed in the showroom. Despite running a stock air filter, it ate factory Stage 1 883s at HOG rides. Power is addictive and there is no replacement of displacement!

xBhp - Briefly tell us all the work that you have done on your bike?

DST99: 1. First thing I customised was the GC. It was raised from factory spec 99mm to current spec of 140mm. This work took almost a



month from design to concept trials; after several trials of material and dimensions.

2. I modified my stock exhaust, apart from usual baffle plug removal, I machined the baffle welds. It provides easy passage for exhaust gases and reduces back pressure. Sacrificing some low end torque for top end power.

3. I modified HD stock ECU tune using Dynojet Power Vision Flash tuner. I now run a far more aggressive timing and rich AFR from most of the map. Running a reduced idle speed of 800 rpm instead of factory 1000 rpm. EITMS(Extended Idle Temp Management System) was modified and in fact my motorcycle cools down by a few degree in a traffic jam rather than overheating.

4. Custom Build Air Filter. I wanted a free flowing air filter but I do not trust cotton type air filters. Having been in the automobile industry for over 7 years now, and being associated with design, I know why manufacturers give paper type filters in most vehicles. Instead of spending ten grand on Stage 1 from HD, I made my own Air Intake. It uses an Esteem OEM paper filter, and my Dynojet PV tells me that it flows nearly 20% more than the stock filter at higher RPMs and about same or better than HD Stage 1 upgraded filter. Mind you Esteem is 1300cc. I have done extensive data collection for verification of volumetric efficiency. Best part is, it cost about one thousand only as compared to ten thousand for HD Stage 1.

5. Next was the big jump of engine big bore upgrade. After a lot of research I zeroed on Hammer Performance 1250cc Kit (10:1). It came with Forged racing pistons and high quality cylinders. All packing and other stuff was included. Installation took little over 10 hours. Post installation I rode around with caution for initial 1500 km and a very conservative tune.

Now I have done about 4000 km after 1250cc kit and the bike accelerates like an angry monster. If you grab a fistful of throttle in the lower gears be ready to control a rolling burnout! It is currently estimated to be making 90bhp and 110Nm of torque. I absolutely love it. Getting hit by over 110Nm of torque as low as 2500rpm is amazing. Since then I have also upgraded 4 of my friend's 883s to 1250. It is amazing bang for buck.

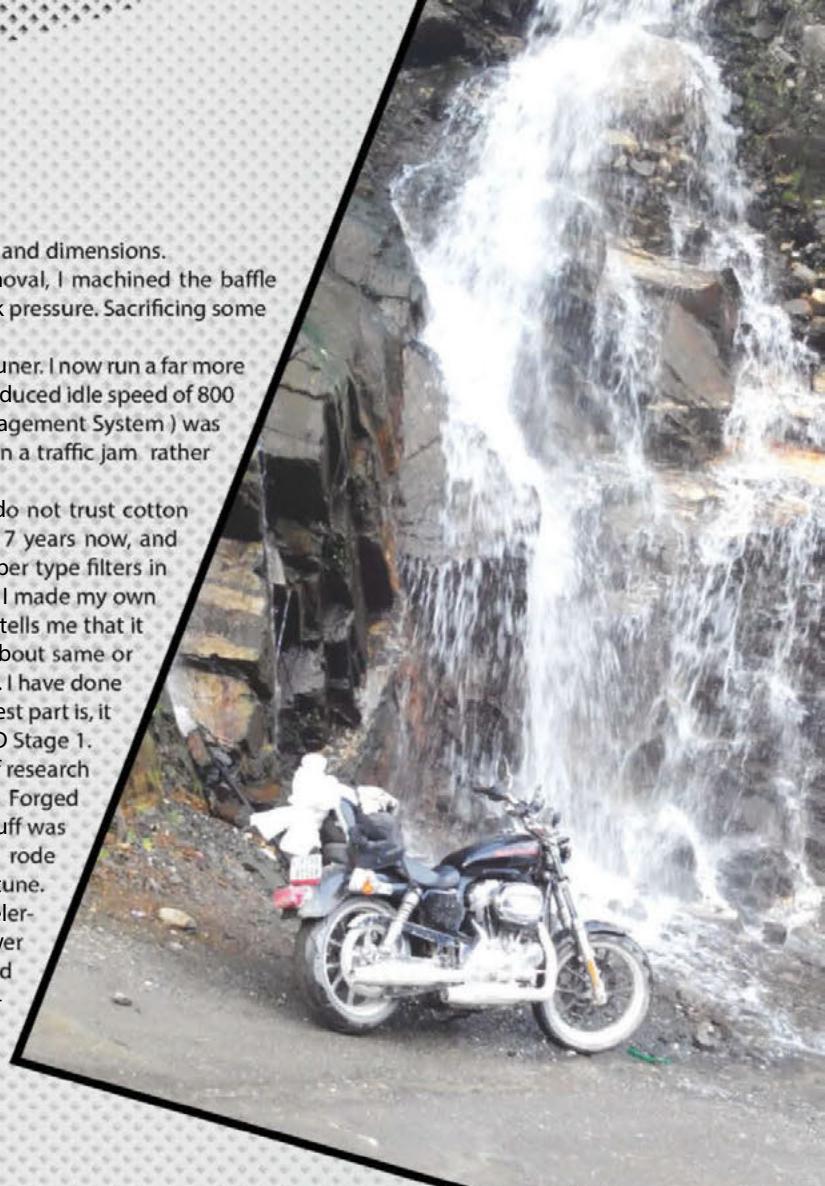
6. I recently upgraded to Screaming Eagle sparkplugs and have done a 3" tank lift as well.

7. In near future I plan to add a turbo charger (GT12 or 15) and take my humble little Sportster into a 140+bhp machine!

xBhp - Did you face any difficulties in procuring parts for customisation?

DST99: Procuring parts from USA is always a big headache. First there is huge shipping charge and then nearly 30% import duty on almost anything you import. Biggest problem is losing stuff in transit. I lost 55k worth of stuff once and learnt a few lessons. I will jot them down for others to learn.

1. Always pay through Paypal. Other methods do not usually cover lost items.





2. Never ask seller to lower invoice value. If you lose the item, you would not get a refund from Paypal if you asked seller to reduce invoice value.
3. Ask seller for transit insurance, although insurance on USPS parcels end as soon as they arrive on Indian soil.
4. Never use flat rate box/ package from USPS priority mail. Flat rate packages are not tracking active in India and non-insured. Flat rate packaging is much cheaper but at the same time much easier to lose in transit as it is not scanned by Indian postal system.

Apart from that almost any part can be shipped to India as long as you are ready to pay Duty. These days I am regularly importing 1250 kits from USA and they usually end up with me in about a month's time.

xBhp - Advice for others who would want to customise their Harleys (or other motorcycles) themselves.

DST99: The whole idea of a custom bike is to stand out, whether in looks or performance is purely an individual's choice. Your ride is also a reflection of what you are. Be sure not to clutter your ride with common ideas. I would advise every rider to start by doing basic maintenance of his own ride.

It's for a rider to imagine a bike he wants and work in that particular direction. Do not get influenced by what others are doing/buying. Do your own research, identify what you want. Then Buy it or make it as you please. Not everyone can make parts; everyone does not need to either. Do not blindly agree to what shopkeepers suggest, not even workshops. Recently someone called me and wanted my help. He was in a pickle. Some shop sold and installed S&S Big Bore kit on his bike. Now S&S is a big name and people trust a shop selling branded stuff. That guy paid top coin and was sent home after installation and told that he does not need an ECU retune. Some stupid fuelling device will take care of the extra CC. Poor guy was never told that 883 and 1200 need different Ignition timing as well. He ran his bike for a few days and had his piston crack into two halves due to too aggressive timing of 883.

Whatever you want, research it on your own. This segment of motorcycling is leisure biking. It's for fun and satisfaction. And there is no greater satisfaction than to see your own dream come alive. **xBhp**



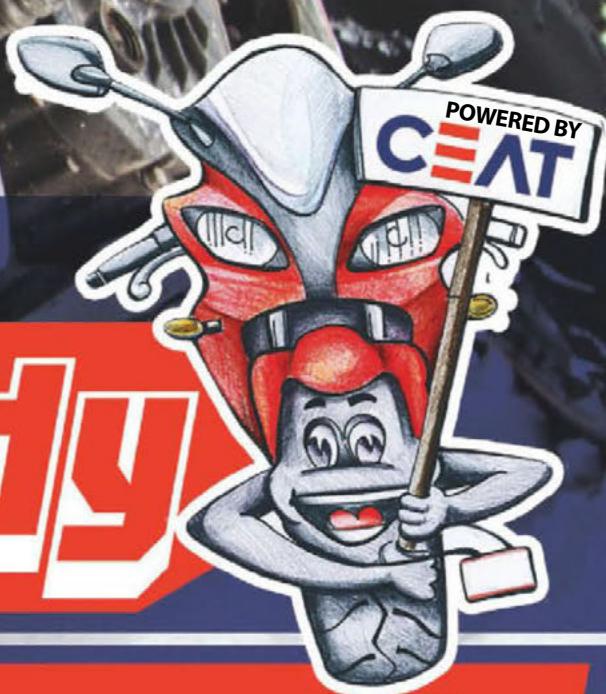
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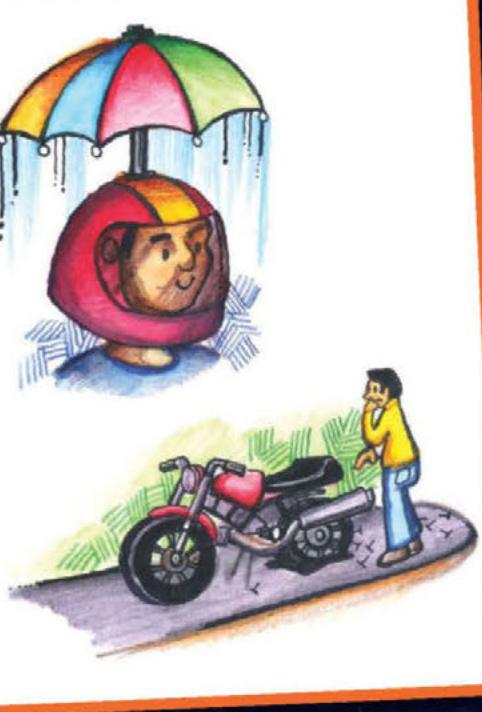


Ready



to roll

The motorcycle touring season is on! It is that time of the year when bikers in India are getting ready to make an annual pilgrimage to the Himalayas and those who aren't able to make it this time will enjoy riding in the plains with the onset of the monsoons. The rains bringing to life the parched earth after a long, hot summer. It is imperative that your motorcycle should be in perfect shape for these long rides. Here we bring to you a quick list of things that should be kept in mind while selecting one of the most vital parts of your bike – **The Tyres**.



Choosing the correct tyre:

This is the first concern for any rider. This choice is dependent upon a number of factors, the most important being the expected terrain on which the bike is to be used. Whether it is tarmac, off-road or a bit of both that the bike will be subject to.

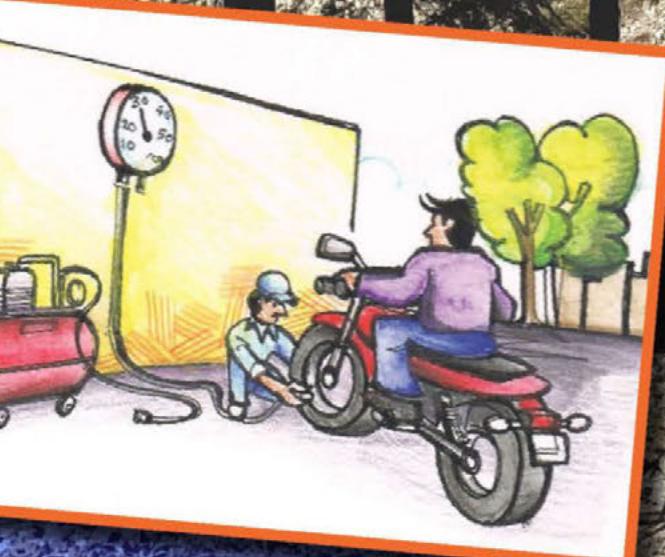
- **Tyre Profile** – A rounder profile makes it easier to corner as the tyre leans in with less effort. A flatter profile is more stable on the straights.

- **Tread Pattern** – Land or Sea? On a tyre the grooves are called the 'sea' while the raised sections around it are the 'land'. A tyre for tarmac will have lot of land and less sea and the depth of the grooves will also be

less, to increase the contact patch with the road. A tyre meant purely for off-road purposes will have small sections of land and lots of sea, with the grooves much deeper to aid gripping the dirt. A dual purpose tyre has large land areas with moderately deep and wide sea areas, so that it has adequate surface area for tarmac and sufficiently deep grooves for gripping dirt. The choice the rider has to make depends on the kind of road one hopes to encounter. These days, dual-purpose tyres are getting very popular among tourers.

- **Tyre Width** – Stock size, upsized or downsized. An upsized tyre will give more grip as it will be wider, while a downsized tyre will give better fuel efficiency due to lower rolling resistance. When in doubt stick to the company recommended sizing, it is generally safe to upsize by one step, though downsizing is not recommended.

- **Tube type or Tubeless** – Tube type tyres have the following drawbacks vis-à-vis i) they deflate quickly after a puncture; and ii) they do not seat as securely on the wheel rim as the tubeless tyre; iii) The relative movement



between the tube and the tyre causes wear points and/or hot-spots on the tube which increase chances of a catastrophic deflation especially at high speeds and on hot tarmac as is common in our country. Tubeless tyres though are generally easier to repair on the road, but in case of a rim bend or sidewall puncture, then it is almost impossible to repair.

Tyre Information: What does all that jargon written on your tyre mean? Below is a simple explanation of all of it –

- **Tyre size markings** vis-à-vis 100/90-17 – 100 is tyre outer profile width, 90 is aspect ratio i.e. % of tyre width in this case 90% of 100 which is 90. This 90mm is the height of the tyre side wall. So the higher the aspect ratio the taller is the side wall. 17 is the diameter of the wheel rim.
- **The Bead Reference Line** - A thin line that runs among the rim when the tyre is mounted. Acts as a reference to check if the tyre is properly mounted.





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- Tyre **Date of Manufacture** marking - a small ellipse with a 4 digit number inside - First two digits are the week number of a year and the last two digits are the year indicator. So a number reading 2314 will mean the tyre was made on the 23rd week of the year 2014.

- The **Tyre Speed Rating** - either the speed limit is mentioned on the side wall 'fit for 120kmph' or as a letter signifying the speed rating Z being the highest.
- The **Tyre Mounting Direction Arrow** - indicates the direction of rotation of the tyre once mounted on the rim.
- The yellow paint spot that shows the **Balance Point**. This yellow spot must be placed opposite to the tyre filing valve. This is for the dynamic balance of the tyre.

Fitment of Tyre: Ensuring that the tyre is fit properly at the Tyre Shop.

- Ensure the wheels are removed carefully from the bike
- Before removing the tyre from the rim, note the direction arrow and mark the direction with a piece of tape on the rim as well.
- Deflate the tyre and remove the valve using a valve key
- The tyre bead should be removed off the rim carefully; excess pressure with the bead breaker or tyre levers might bend the rim at worst or even chip the paint from the alloys.
- If an old wheel, then make sure the inside of the rim is cleaned before fitting on the new tyre
- Check the tyre rotation arrow on the new tyre and match it with the tape you had placed on the rim



Speed Rating	Speed (km/h)
Moped	50
J	100
K	110
L	120
M	130
P	150
Q	160
R	170
S	180
T	190
U	200
H	210
V	240
W	270
Z	over 240



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- Place the rim carefully on the ground and fit in the new tyre, again ensuring that the rim doesn't get damaged.
- Fill air into the tyre until you hear a 'pop' sound as the tyre bead sits into the rim.
- Check recommended air pressure, check the sides to ensure that tyre has fit in properly and there are no leaks.
- Get the wheels balanced with the new tyre and finally get it fit back on to your motorcycle. You are then good to go.

Usage of Tyre in Different Conditions: We at xBhp have toured on CEAT tyres in a variety of terrain, from slush, ice, snow, dry and wet tarmac, sand, rocks, and pretty much everything that a tourer encounters on his many travels. And for these rides we have used a plethora of motorcycles from various brands and have ended up using all the models of tyres that CEAT offers.

Tyre Care: These are a few tips during your ride and in general which you can employ to ensure that your tyres last longer and you ride safe always.

- Accurate tyre pressure is the most important thing for a tyre, as it is the air that carries the weight of your motorcycle not the tyre carcass. The tyre only does a fine job of holding that air within. Sounds obvious, but often overlooked.
- Tyres can contribute upto 10% of a motorcycle's shock absorption capability.
- Tyres absorb the low amplitude but high frequency bumps that appear on seemingly smooth tarmac at high speed.



- Tyre Pressure helps maintaining the operating temperature of the rubber.
- Ensure tyre gauge being used is a digital one in proper working condition. A faulty gauge will get your readings mixed up. Most roadside tyre shops have archaic analogue meters with inaccurate readings.
- Recommended tyre pressure is set on 'Cold Tyres', i.e. tyres which have been unused overnight or parked in the shade for a few hours.
- When travelling from one location to another, remember altitude and temperature also changes air pressure. Tyre pressure set in 32 degree Centigrade Mumbai would not be ideal for 3 degree Delhi winter. So check tyre pressure as you move from place to place.

Keep these points in mind before you go buy a new set of tyres for your journey this touring season, and ride hard and ride safe! **xBhp**







**SHORT OF FUNDS?
Buy your Motorcycle and
Gear from:**



India's No.1 Market for
Used Motorcycles

A couple ride all the way from Kerala to Nepal on their Bullet

Text: Shaan Nazeem

Photos: Finiya and Shaan Nazeem



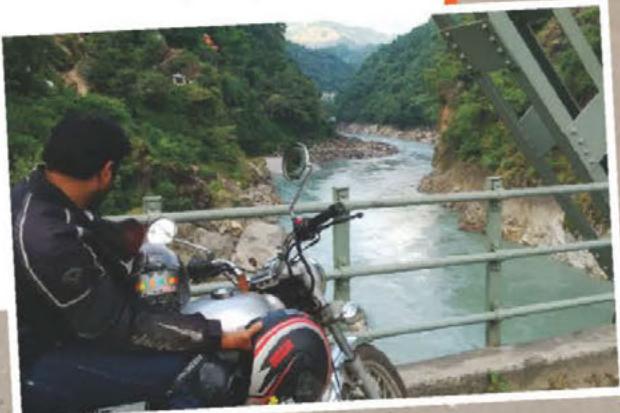
THE PROLOGUE

As far as introductions go mine is pretty simple, I am Shaan, a biker from the humble state of Kerala. If that's the case then you might be wondering to why I am writing this travelogue? The answer is simple.....Finiya!

To avoid the confusion that's not the name of any manufacturer of motorcycles or performance parts, but instead that's the name of my better half, the love of my life, my wife! I know it sounds cheesy but there's no better way to express how I feel about her. She is my inspiration, and the sole guiding force that made my dream come true, the "Indo-Nepal Odyssey", our ride of a life time.

THE PLAN

Khardung La is like the mecca for bikers not only in India but also for riders around the world. Being a long time follower of the HVK(HiVayKing) society of travel enthusiasts headed by H.V. Kumar sir, access to information pertaining to the route was effortless, and it was then that I understood the restrictions imposed by this route. After much consideration and going through a fellow xBhpian, Rammoorthy sir's wonderfully descriptive travelogue a slight change of plans were in order;





Odyssey

INDO - NEPAL



Khardung La was replaced with Nepal, and when I conveyed my intentions to H.V. Kumar sir, he sent me a ride plan which was 28 pages long!

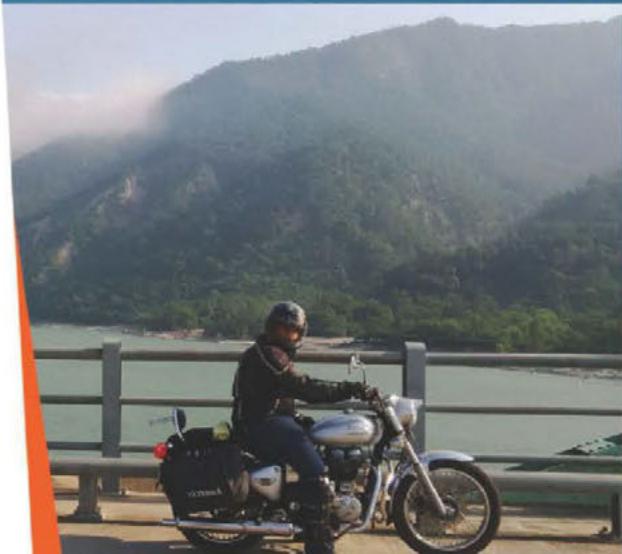
THE RIDE

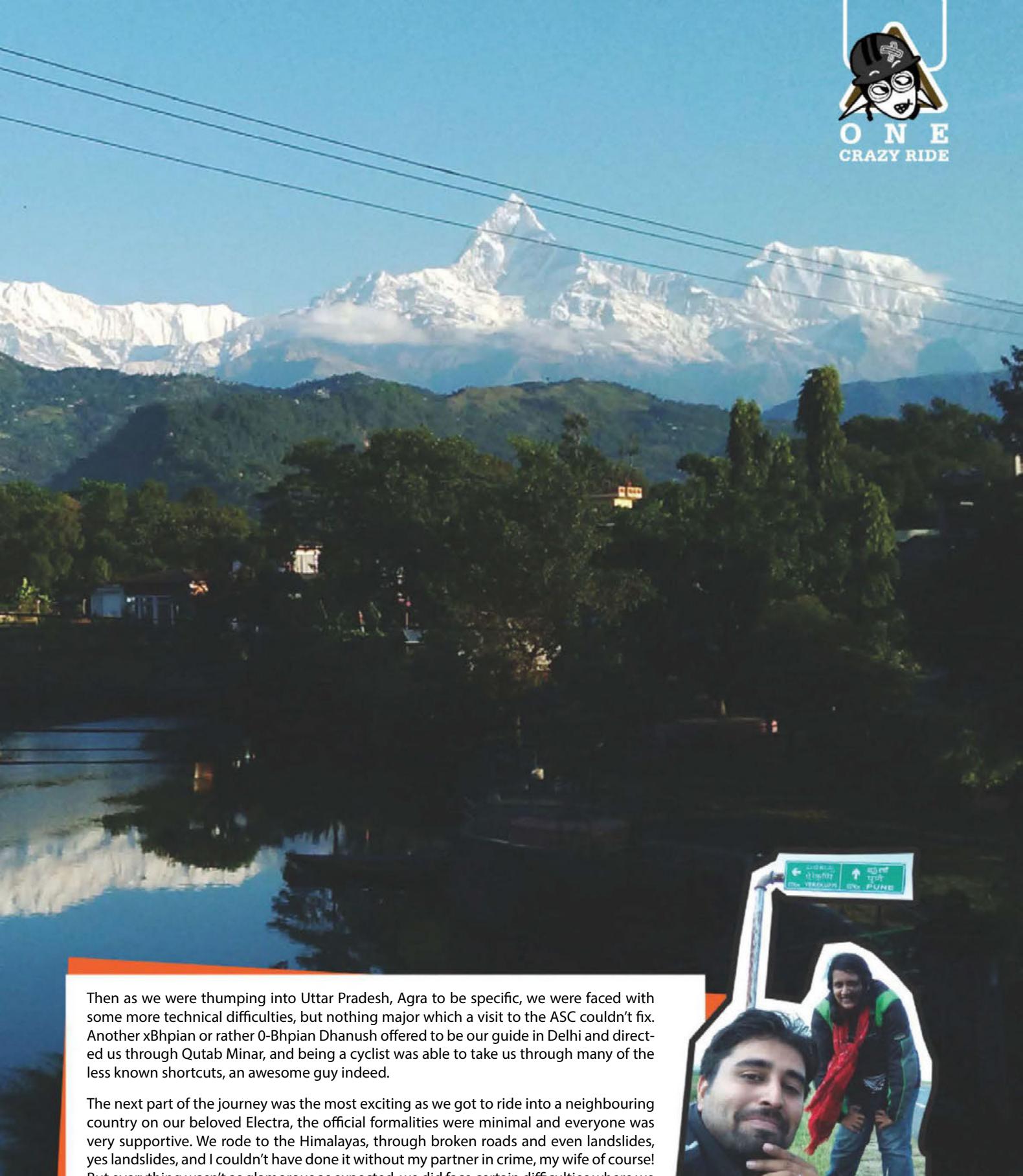
With my brand new Royal Enfield Electra 350 which had an odo reading of just 4500 km; I decided to embark upon the ride of a lifetime with none other than the love of my life. But not so soon! Since I'm not the lone wolf I used to be and I was responsible for another human being who had blind faith in me, convincing our families held a challenge of its own. But as Paulo



Coelho wrote in 'The Alchemist'; "when you really want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it." Everything went according to plan and with everyone's blessings (including my gracious superiors who even went the extra mile by wishing us well for the trip) we started out from my hometown; Kollam, though to say my exit was a bit too dramatic, I told my mom in my native tongue that I would be back after roaming around the country in a humorous tone, cause certain things you get to do only once and you have to make sure its touchwood.

Riding within India was fine, not much hassles except for some minor niggles with the Electra, other than that we were thumping at a relaxed pace from Kerala to Karnataka and from there to Maharashtra and then to Gujarat after which we thumped into the mystic state of Rajasthan where Enroute we crossed paths with a Malayali Bulleteer who was also an Army Officer, he helped us in finding the right hotel, after which we talked for a while and then parted ways.





Then as we were thumping into Uttar Pradesh, Agra to be specific, we were faced with some more technical difficulties, but nothing major which a visit to the ASC couldn't fix. Another xBhpiian or rather 0-Bhpiian Dhanush offered to be our guide in Delhi and directed us through Qutab Minar, and being a cyclist was able to take us through many of the less known shortcuts, an awesome guy indeed.

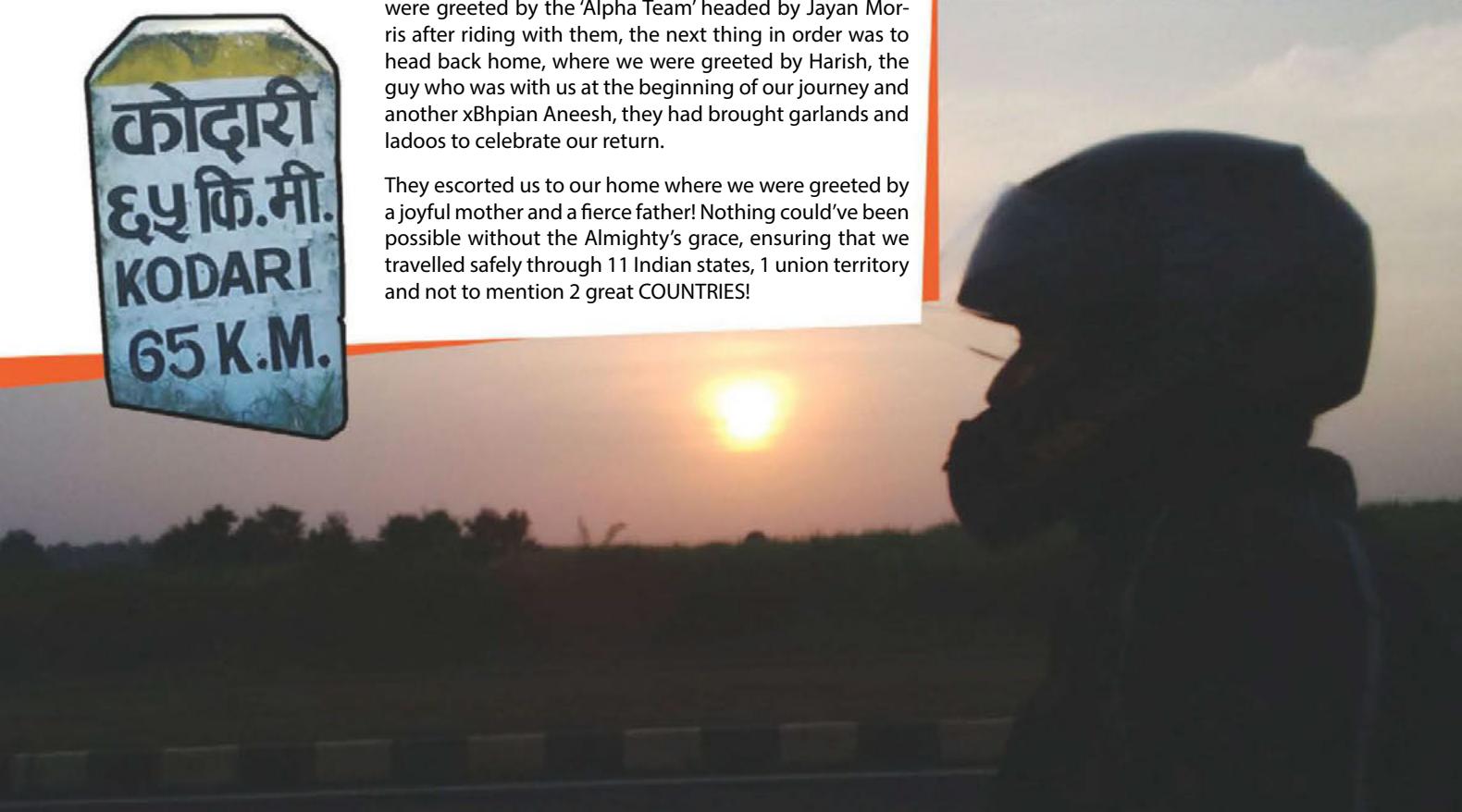
The next part of the journey was the most exciting as we got to ride into a neighbouring country on our beloved Electra, the official formalities were minimal and everyone was very supportive. We rode to the Himalayas, through broken roads and even landslides, yes landslides, and I couldn't have done it without my partner in crime, my wife of course! But everything wasn't as glamorous as expected, we did face certain difficulties where we were temporarily a bit short of the green stuff, and we had to survive on drinking water alone for over 24 hours, it was straining my soul to have put my beloved through all this hardship, and in spite of insisting that she could return at any point of journey if she didn't feel up to it, she stood by my side, what more could a man ask for!





After replenishing our stock of 'Vitamin M' and rewarding the people who helped us in our hardships, we bid farewell to Nepal with mixed feelings. The return run was ecstatic and as H.V Kumar sir had mentioned it was the Homerun, we were high on adrenalin and were thumping through the states, heading for Kanyakumari, where we were greeted by the 'Alpha Team' headed by Jayan Morris after riding with them, the next thing in order was to head back home, where we were greeted by Harish, the guy who was with us at the beginning of our journey and another xBhpian Aneesh, they had brought garlands and ladoos to celebrate our return.

They escorted us to our home where we were greeted by a joyful mother and a fierce father! Nothing could've been possible without the Almighty's grace, ensuring that we travelled safely through 11 Indian states, 1 union territory and not to mention 2 great COUNTRIES!

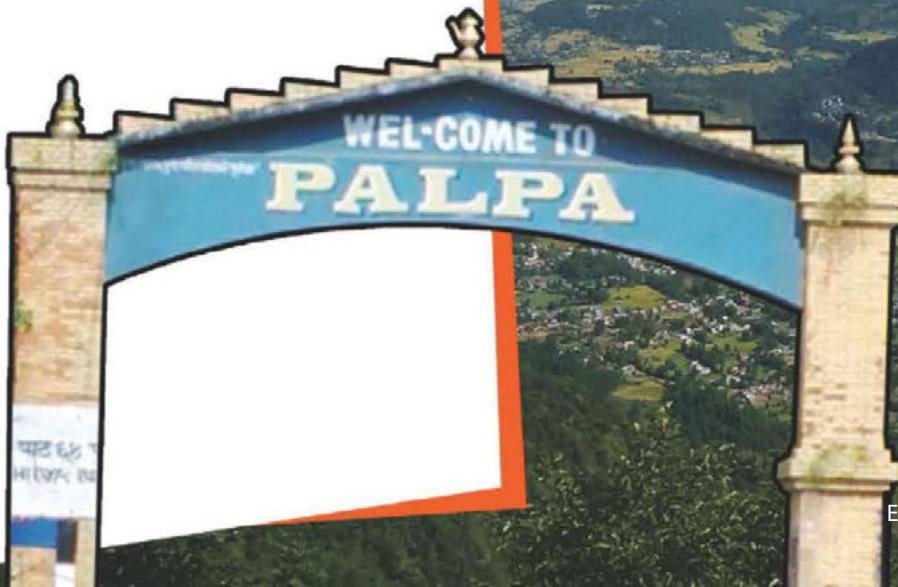




THE EPILOGUE

I used to believe that being a biker is all about buying the best motorcycle available in the market and then riding it to kingdom come. But after this epic ride, I understood that a motorcycle is just another accessory that money can buy, it is the people that stand by us and who support us through our journeys that really matter and they are what keep us going. Never before have had I felt so in sync with the life force surrounding us all. And none of this would've happened if it weren't for my family, friends, supporters, and last but surely not the least, my co-rider, my partner in crime, my love, my wife, my Finiya!

What more to say, I've everything any man could ever wish for and much more. But rest assured, this wouldn't be the last you'll be hearing of our endeavours. **XBhp**



The Kawasaki Ninja 300 is taken to the next level by an xBhpian as he reduces the weight and bumps the bhp of his bike!

Text and Photos: **Pratik Patel**

For 30 years motorcycling has been an integral part of my life. Like most people of my generation I grew up on a steady diet of 2 strokes. But alas the days of the 2 strokes were over. After owning a couple of 4 strokes (TVS RTR 160 and Yamaha R15), I was ready to buy my first big 4-stroke bike. After couple of false starts I was finally encouraged by my wife to go for the then newly introduced Kawasaki Ninja 300.

KAWASAKI NINJA 300

The stock bike experience

William Edwards Deming (one of the fathers' of modern quality systems) defined quality as "(Quality is the) degree to which performance meets expectations (of the customer)". By this definition the Kawasaki Ninja 300 is of excellent quality. It not only met my expectations but also exceeded them by far. People tend to compare bikes and their performance on paper and argue over which bike is better. However, anyone who has spent time on a Ninja 300 will realise that figures on paper don't tell the real story. It is the complete ownership experience that defines a bike. The stock bike is a true hallmark of Japanese quality and refinement. The build quality is excellent and feels remarkably solid with no squeaks or irritating vibrations from any part of the bike even after 2 years of ownership.

The stock engine is extremely smooth and refined. The twin cylinder character of the bike makes highway rides euphoric experiences. While the engine is conservatively tuned compared to some of its counterparts, it will munch up miles of highway at constant speeds of 150 to 160 kmph (road conditions permitting of course) like you were sitting in a theatre watching a movie munching popcorn. The engine is a bit conservatively tuned but that does not mean that it is a laggard in any sense. This engine is built to last. With proper care and regular maintenance this is an engine that could easily do 1,50,000 to 2,00,000 km before requiring any major overhauling.

The tractability of the engine allows the bike to move through the city traffic like a breeze. The gearbox is slick and smooth. Clutch action is light and predictable. Thanks to the ducted fan, which channels hot air away from your legs, riding in traffic is not uncomfortable or unpleasant. Suspension and tyres are pretty good. While I have heard a few complaints from fellow Ninja 300 riders about the tyres, I have never faced any problems. The tyres take about 2 km to warm up after which they offer very decent grip levels and feedback. Even in wet the tyres are very predictable. The stock suspension is pretty good for regular riding. However, if you are going for track days the limitations of the suspension will become obvious after a few hard laps.

As mentioned earlier the bike has a conservative tuned state. This allows the bike to return very decent fuel economy. On the highways at constant speeds of 110 to 120 kmph in Eco mode the bike gives 32 kmpl. The conservative tuning also allows the bike to use regular unleaded fuel. There is no need for any type of high-octane fuel, just ensure that the quality of fuel is good. The brakes are good but not what you would expect from a bike in this class. The first thing that I would recommend anyone to do is to switch over to steel braided brake lines and sintered brake pads. This will transform the braking system into real stoppers. There have been complaints with the stock brake pads, which are made of organic material. These seem to wear out fast, especially so in the rains.

Other than the above, there is very little to complain about of the stock bike. Spares are expensive and should you put down your bike expect a minimum of 20 to 30 days in the workshop, as spares are not available off the shelf and a bill will most likely be north of Rs. 60,000/- This makes zero depreciation insurance a must for



owning this bike. Service intervals are around 12,000 km, which makes up in part for the high cost of consumables like oil, oil filter, air filter, etc.

Customisation of the Bike

Many people have asked me "Why do it? Why are you wasting money?" The simple answer I give is the same as given by a very famous mountaineer, George Mallory, who was asked, "Why do you want to climb the Mount Everest?" his answer "Because it's there".

Customisation can be divided into 2 categories i.e. Farkles (Accessories & Looks) and Performance. For me the performance part takes priority over the looks. That certainly does not mean that looks will be overlooked. It's just that I prefer my bikes to not look loud. Performance customisation is an expensive hobby. It requires hours of careful research, planning and implementation. The number of man hours spent can literally run in to hundreds and resources required to make effective changes can weigh very heavily on the pocket. In the case of Ninja 300 the performance customisation cost is approximately between INR 20,000 to INR 25,000 per rear wheel horsepower increase.





A stock Ninja 300 makes around 34 bhp (rear wheel horsepower). Currently my bike is making approximately 40 bhp at the rear wheel. The bike also weighs 20 kg less than the stock bike. The ultimate aim is to reach 50 bhp at the rear wheel and reduce weight by another 15 kg. Essentially a bike's performance can be increased in two ways i.e. increase the power output of the engine and/or reduce the weight of the bike. I would recommend that anyone interested in customisation starts with reduction of weight before touching the engine. The list of changes made is a long one and due to space constraints I will only go into some of them briefly:

Performance changes:

1. Leo Vince LVI Full Exhaust System, AreaP/ Fuel Moto Fuel Controller & PiperCross Plug In Filter.

This set of changes gave us an increase in performance by approximately 3 bhp while reducing weight by 4 kg. Fuelling is extremely important if you want the best out of your investments. AreaP provides customised maps based on a particular build. Their fuelling is spot on and allows you to get the maximum out of your hardware.

2. Spiegler Stainless Steel Brake Lines & Galfer HH Sintered brake pads.

This is one of the first things that I would recommend for all Ninja 300 owners. These will transform the brakes into real stoppers. To top it off, the red lines look amazing and add 'oomph' to the bike.



3. Brembo Rims & MetzelerSportec M5 Interact tyres.

The Marchesini Brembo wheels are made of forged aluminium that provides a weight savings of 5.5 kg. This significantly decreases spinning mass, a very important factor in ensuring more useable power on the tarmac. The change helps deliver more power on the road, improves acceleration and as an added bonus they look good!

4. Ride On Tyre Protection System.

Another add on that is highly recommended, even for stock bike owners. The Ride On TPS balances the wheels and improves tyre life. It is so good at its job that the counter weights on the wheel can be removed. It works as advertised.

5. Renthal 41 Teeth Rear Sprocket, Vortex 14 Teeth SS Front Sprocket & Rolon X ring chain.

With the substantial decrease in weight and increase in power the stock gearing was under-gearred. The final gearing was reduced by 1 tooth to spread out the power and make it more useable. The Renthal rear sprocket also gave us 1/2 Kg weight saving in spinning mass.

6. Scottoiler E System chain oiler.

Cleaning the chain is one of the most dirty and disliked parts of motorcycle maintenance. The Scottoiler chain oiling system keeps the chain well lubricated and provides significantly longer chain and sprocket life. It also makes for cleaner running, as the oil is not tacky in nature making any fling off on to the rear wheel far easier to clean up. Added bonus is that due to a well-lubricated chain at all times, the bike runs smoother and vibration free. It also helps deliver optimum power and fuel efficiency at all times.

7. *Sato Racing Rear Sets.*

The stock bike has a somewhat conservative riding position. I personally prefer a more aggressive riding position. Therefore, fully adjustable Sato Racing rear sets were installed. The rear sets have precision-machined components and all linkages are reinforced with bush bearings for smooth positive gearshifts and rear braking. The added bonus is that these rear sets weigh around 700gms less than the stock parts.



8. *FLO Stainless Steel Oil Filter.*

The FLO stainless steel oil filter is a lifetime oil filter which can be cleaned and reused repeatedly for the lifetime of the bike. The outer casing of the oil filter has cooling fins. These fins cool allow for cooler oil operating temperatures.

9. *All Balls Tapper Roller Bearings for Steering.*

This particular conversion is a part of a larger plan for complete front-end upgrade, which will include USD type forks. I needed to address the weakest link in the front-end assembly. The stock bearings work just fine for a stock setup. However, for the changes I have planned for in the near future, the bearing setup needed to be beefed up with tapper roller bearings.

10. *Translogic Micro Dash 3 digital dashboard.*

This is one of my favourite upgrades. Digital dashboards have always fascinated me. The Translogic dash is of exceptional quality. It has a gear indicator, voltmeter, programmable shift light, temperature meter and a lap timer. This one change more than any other, sets Ninja San apart from all other Ninja 300s.

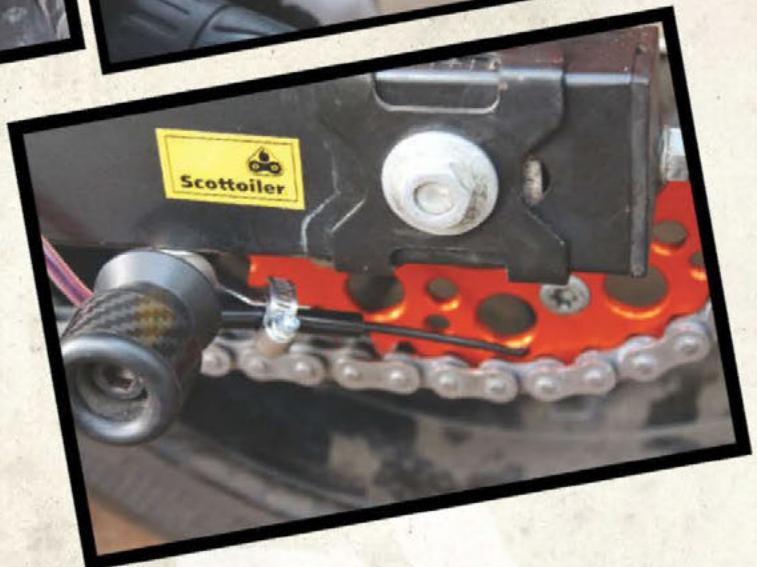
11. *Custom made Top Triple Clamp and Woodcraft Clip On handle bars.*

In addition to the Sato Racing rear sets I decided to use Woodcraft Clip On handle bars to change the riding position to a more aggressive one. Installation of the clip-ons proved to be more challenging than was initially expected. There clearance issues where the free movement of the front end was getting hampered. I decided to go for a custom made triple clamp that was designed from ground up by Motozone, Pune. The custom made triple clamp turned out to be beyond my wildest dreams.



12. *Takai Racing Juice Boot (Ignition Booster) & RipForce 4 (Ignition Coils)*

Quite simply these are best ignition coils that money can buy on this side of the bike world (on the other side is



MotoGP world). Takai ignition booster and coils will increase the power output by 1 to 2-rear wheel Bhp per cylinder! While an expensive upgrade, well worth the investment.

Farkles (Accessories & Looks)

1. MRA Light Smoke Wind Screen.

No matter how careful you are the stock windscreen is prone to scratches and becomes dull quickly. I replaced it with a high quality MRA windscreen.

2. ASV C/5 Adjustable Levers.

I have short stubby fingers, which made it difficult for me to operate the stock levers. I opted for the ASV C/5 adjustable levers for their outstanding make and range of adjustments.

3. Lethal Threat Devil Babe tank pad.

Wanted to give Ninja San some company while I am not around!

4. Rizoma Garffio LED Indicator Lights.

These excellent quality LED indicators looked sleek and fast.

5. Rizoma Lux Billet Grips (Red).

Once again Rizoma's quality shines in these superb grips. Added bonus is that they are extremely comfortable.

As mentioned earlier this is a very expensive hobby. For performance upgrades there is an element of risk and failures are a part of the game. If you do not have an appetite for the risk it is best to stick to Farkles where there is almost no risk involved.

If you are going to work on the bike you should have reasonable mechanical skills, however, if you are going to get the work done from someone else make sure the person has good mechanical skills, is experienced, has all the tools and follows good shop floor practices. A good way to judge if the

person is good enough to work on your bike is to spend some time in his workshop and observe him working on other bikes. Does he use a torque wrench? Does he work in a systematic and planned manner? Does he plan his moves before starting the work? These are all key performance indicators for the quality of his work.

One last thing, do not go for cheap parts, no matter how tempting it is. There are no free meal tickets in this world. The initial investment in good parts will payoff in the long term with a better overall experience. **xBhp**



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POWER IS NOTHING WITHOUT CONTROL

Another Wrangler True Wanderer 3.0 Finalist
visits the state of Rajasthan on his bike

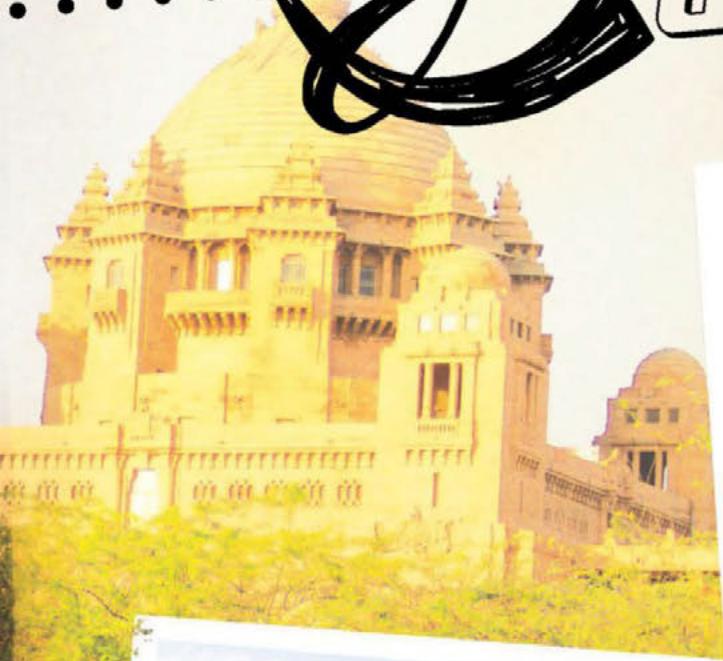
Text and Photos: Shailendra Singh

EXPLORING THE राजस्थाना होमेलैण्ड . . .





Rajasthan UNPLUGGED



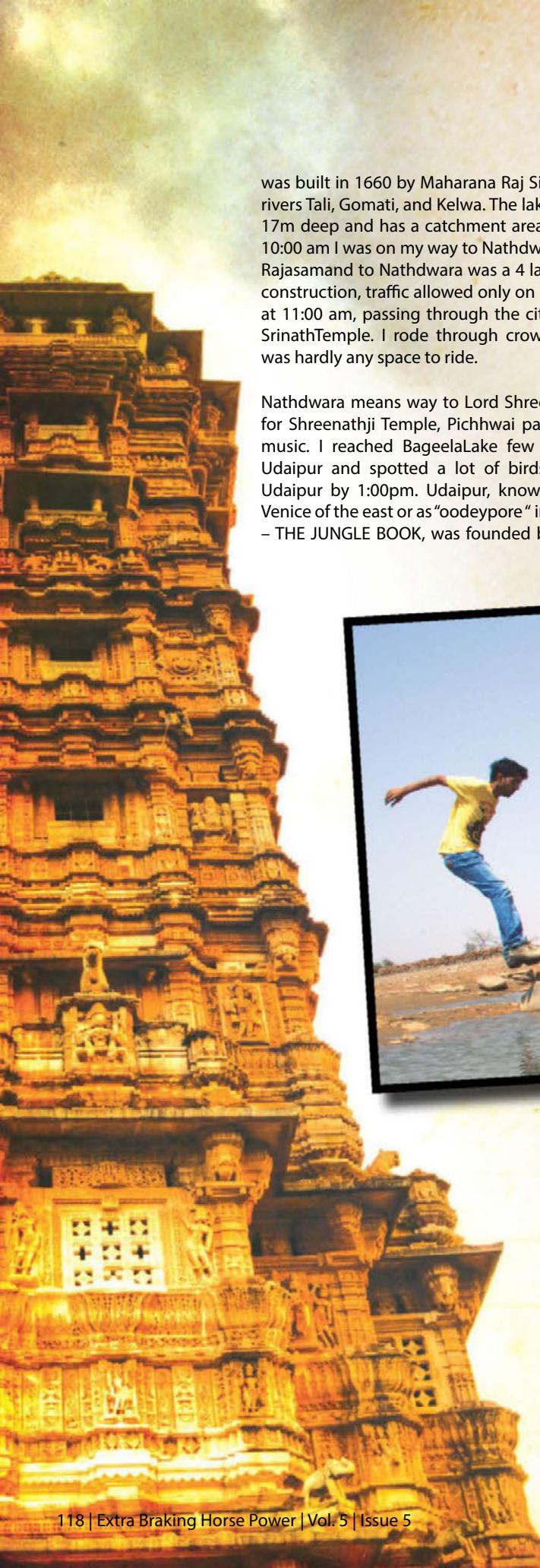
DAY 1

The ride of a lifetime was about to start. I was flagged off at 11:30AM from the Wrangler store in Sardarpura. Onlookers cheered and whistled as I started my bike. With a slight twist of the throttle the TW 3.0 final ride began, an adrenaline rush had set a strong vibe in me. I rode towards the first destination on my mind - the Mehrangarh Fort. It was built in 1459 by Rao Jodha, after whom the city is named. The fort is located 400 ft above the city and houses a few palaces, courtyards and a museum. At 4:30pm I reached Bullet Baba Temple which is about 20 km before Pali. The temple is devoted to a 350cc RE Bullet, after which the temple is named. The road to Kumbhalgarh passes through a dense hilly forest, riding under starlit sky was incredible. I reached Kumbhalgarh by 9:00pm, but alas the Fort's lights were switched off. Having missed it by 30 minutes, I didn't let my spirits sink. As the forest didn't seem safe for camping, I went for lodging. I returned to Kumbhalgarh and spotted a hotel. Whilst I was inside the hotel someone had opened the zip of my tank bag and a mobile phone was missing. Though I check all my belongings before starting off from every breakpoint, I still backtracked with a hope of finding my phone.

DAY 2

My phone was nowhere to be found. With that, I had lost some photos and videos of the previous day. It was a huge setback. But on the second morning refreshed I went to Kumbhalgarh Fort which was built during the 15th century, by Rana Kumbha. It is a world heritage site; its 36km long perimeter walls are the second largest in Asia. From there I left for my next destination -Rajasamand Lake. The narrow road leading to the lake passed through small villages and hills. I was spell bound by the sight of the lake. It was visible as far as I could see; the cool breeze dried the sweaty me up instantaneously. This lake

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was built in 1660 by Maharana Raj Singh. Built across 3 rivers Tali, Gomati, and Kelwa. The lake is approximately 17m deep and has a catchment area of 500 sq. km. By 10:00 am I was on my way to Nathdwara , the road from Rajasamand to Nathdwara was a 4 lane highway under construction, traffic allowed only on one side. I reached at 11:00 am, passing through the city market to reach SrinathTemple. I rode through crowded streets, there was hardly any space to ride.

Nathdwara means way to Lord Shreenath. It is famous for Shreenathji Temple, Pichhwai paintings and Haveli music. I reached BageelaLake few kilometres before Udaipur and spotted a lot of birds there. I reached Udaipur by 1:00pm. Udaipur, known as city of lakes, Venice of the east or as "oodeypore" in Rudyard Kipling's – THE JUNGLE BOOK, was founded by Maharana Uday

Singh in 1553 and had been capital of Mewar Kingdom. Pichola Lake is an artificial fresh water lake built in 1362 by localities and named after a neighbouring village – Picholi. When Maharana Udai Singh first saw this lake, he was so fascinated that he built a city near the lake! I reached Doodh Talai at 5:00pm and took the cable car ride to the fort. The sunset point at the fort provides a panoramic view of Udaipur. After the cable car ride I headed back to Eklingarh jungle.

DAY 3

The next morning I sipped hot tea and hogged a few samosas for breakfast and headed to Fateh Sagar Lake. I reached Fateh Sagar by 10:00 am. The lake was re constructed by Maharana Fatah Singh in 1888. It was a beautiful 4 lane highway from Udaipur to Chittaurgarh.



It was a nonstop ride till Chittaurgarh, where I reached at 4:30pm and took a quick breather. It started to rain and the smell of the wet earth, water droplets falling from trees, strong winds, birds retreating to their nests was an experience I won't forget soon. The feel of cold water on my sun burned skin was a pleasure.

I left for Bundi at 7:30pm. After just 15 km the weather forced me to spend the night on the way itself.

DAY 4

It was a beautiful four lane cemented highway from Chittorgarh. Some 40 km before Bundi, I left the highway and took a narrow village road. I cruised towards Bundi under the scorching sun. While riding I could feel hot air on my skin as the air penetrated through the gaps between helmet/jacket collar, jacket sleeves/ gloves. Due to the brutal summer heat my exposed skin was tanned and with every blow of hot air I felt a burning sensation on my hands and neck. After a few km I saw a rusted metallic board indicating Bhimlat

Falls. I reached Bhimlat Waterfalls, but the falls had dried up completely, only a small pond existed. I rode my bike through the terrain where water flows, in order to reach the other end. I rode carefully from one end of waterfalls to the other, finding my way through the protruding rocks. I reached near BundiFort at 3:00pm. After clicking a few pictures, I was on my way to Jaipur. It was a smooth 4 laned highway to Jaipur. I reached Jaipur at 9:00pm, met the official from sky waltz hot air ballooning and confirmed my morning flight.

DAY 5

I parked my bike at Amber Fort and travelled to the take-off point. As we approached the spot, we saw a huge colourful balloon being inflated. There were 3 others guests who arrived in another taxi. From some distance we saw the pilot operating the burners and inflating the balloon. Hot air balloon flights are usually conducted in the morning or evening as the wind condition is most favourable at these times. The pilot signalled the ground staff, turned towards us and said "Alright! Ladies and gentlemen here we go." After an hour long flight, the pilot gave landing details to the ground staff.

After that I returned to the hotel, had breakfast, and was all set to move for my next destination Neemrana. I reached Neemrana Fort at 4:30pm and

found that it was closed for the public. Taal Chappar was on my radar, but it was at least 200km away. Without wasting time I headed towards Taal Chappar and covered as much distance before the night halt. I saw an old canopy Enroute and stopped for pictures, when I started back, the battery went dead. Stuck on a highway, with no help at hand wasn't an ideal situation. I immediately took out the tool kit and removed the battery. I inspected the wiring and found insulation damaged at a point. I covered the portion with insulation tape, connected the terminals and tried starting the bike. It worked! I was too tired to continue by 10:00pm and looked for a camping site as I rode. Unable to find a safe camping site, I reached a petrol bunk and explained my situation to the only employee present there. As it was time to sleep, I was provided the luxury of a mattress. I had the most comfortable sleep that night.

DAY 6

As I was leaving the petrol pump attendants asked me to have tea before leaving. I then thanked them and left for Sikar. By 8:00am I crossed Salasar and stopped at a highway dhaba for breakfast. I was on my way to Taal Chappar when I saw an exquisite blue bird. I saw an Indian roller flying in front of my bike; I saw a similar bird after a minute and another in a few seconds. Indian rollers are considered auspicious. I realized I was close to Taal Chappar, a paradise for wildlife photography enthusiasts. Taal Chappar is a world famous wildlife



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sanctuary spread across 719 hectare. I spotted a few Black Bucks, Chinkaras and some birds there. I started for Bikaner at 1:00pm, the sun was at its brutal best. After an hour, finding shade was impossible. I reached KarniTemple at 6:00pm and bought prasad there. I walked barefoot inside the temple where I first noticed the massive silver gates. Right from the entrance the rats were visible. I had heard a lot about Karni-Temple and its popularity among foreign tourists. There are a few white rats in the temple, sighting them is considered auspicious. Karni was a Hindu sage and considered to be an incarnation of Goddess Durga. She laid the foundation stone of Meherangarh Fort in 1457 on request of King Rao Jodha.

On 21st march 1538 she was on her way to Deshnok along with her followers, when she is said to have disappeared at the age of 151. I slowly walked in as rats crawled near my feet. I then headed towards Junagarh Fort. Unfortunately the fort was closed by the time I reached. I purchased a chicken sausage packet, 2 onions, a lime, chat masala from a shop and a calendar's metallic stamping that holds it together (from a scrap shop). I returned to the Bikaner highway and searched for a camping site. I came across a small piece of barren land that I found suitable for camping.

I parked my bike and pitched the tent, after which I went for twig hunt with a led torch.



DAY 7

I woke up at 7:00am wrapped up my stuff and headed towards Jodhpur. I hardly came across any motorized vehicle on my way. Camel carts were the only mode of transport. I cruised on the road passing through fields. Soon the road was covered with thick sand. It took me an hour to ride through that 10km stretch, as my bike swayed like a snake. Some distance after the sandy road I hit the Jodhpur highway. It was just 5:00 when I reached Jodhpur, and I had no intentions of heading home. I had 7 hours left before the ride would come to an end. So I headed towards Umaid Bhawan.

At 7:00pm I was at the temple behind Meherangarh Fort. While I clicked some low shutter shots I saw fireworks in the sky, it was a mesmerizing moment.

After a week long ride in the scorching sun, riding through a variety of landscapes, clicking some exquisite wildlife species, feasting on some of the finest cuisines, I was back home on 30th April 10:00pm. **xBhp**



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**Wrangler's True Wanderer 3.0 Finalist shares his
experiences of travelling to the Konkan Coast**

Text and Photos: **Aniruddha Meher**



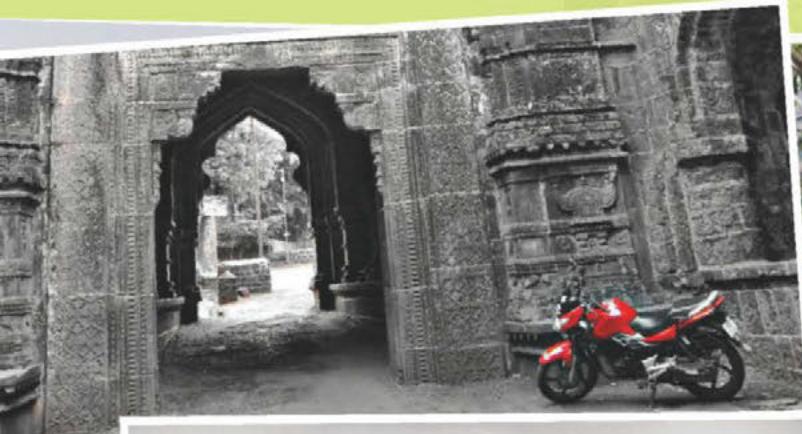
I was a part of Wrangler True Wanderer Season 3, and it is a proud period of my life when I rode with nine other talented bikers across India. This is a short log of the places I covered in the 7-day fully sponsored ride as a part of TW3.0

My first destination was a little town called 'Chincholi Morachi' –literally translated to Village with tamarinds and peacocks. It is about 50 km from Pune on the Nagar highway. There are thousands of peacocks in this sleepy village, and one can experience the beauty of rural life by staying at one of the numerous home stays there. I also visited 'Nighoj', famous for its natural potholes! There is a river bed with many sized potholes that are formed by small stones being ground in a circular motion by the current. It is a sight to behold, and they are the largest site of such potholes in Asia.

On the second day I visited the Bhuleshwar Temple - an old temple with intricate carvings. Invaders from the past have destroyed the faces of almost every carving, but what remains is breath-taking. The temple is well maintained. If you go before 11 AM you will witness a miracle. When you offer sweets to the idol, the priest keeps the sweets in the golden mask of Shiva, and after a while some of the sweets are gone! It remains a miracle, one that has baffled many. It was getting hot there, so I headed to cooler climes. Enroute, I passed the Prati-Balaji Temple at Ketkawale. The Pune-Satara highway was blazing hot. With adequate breaks, I proceeded to Koyananagar. This is an upcoming hill station in the cradle of the Sahyadris. It was much cooler there than the burning highway, and I certainly slept peacefully after getting barbecued the entire day.

On the third day after a relaxing boat ride in Koyana River, I headed towards Konkan area. I visited 'Dervan' Shiv Srushti first. There is a nicely done museum of murals based on King Shivaji's life. Later I joined the Mumbai-Goa highway for a fast ride towards that night's destination. There was another temple called 'Sangameshwar' which was Enroute. Sambhaji - The son of King Shivaji - was captured in this temple by Aurangzeb, who then tortured Sambhaji to death. It is a 1600 year old temple with serene atmosphere. A busy highway passes right next to the village, and yet very few visitors know the story of this temple. After witnessing a beautiful sunset from the beaches of Ratnagiri, sipping fresh coconut water, I made my way towards my destination - Ganesh Gule.

Ganesh Gule is a picture perfect Konkan village with very few tourists. You have the whole beach to yourself, and nothing soothes strained nerves like a lonely beach with its thunderous sound of the crashing waves! There is a temple in this village, which





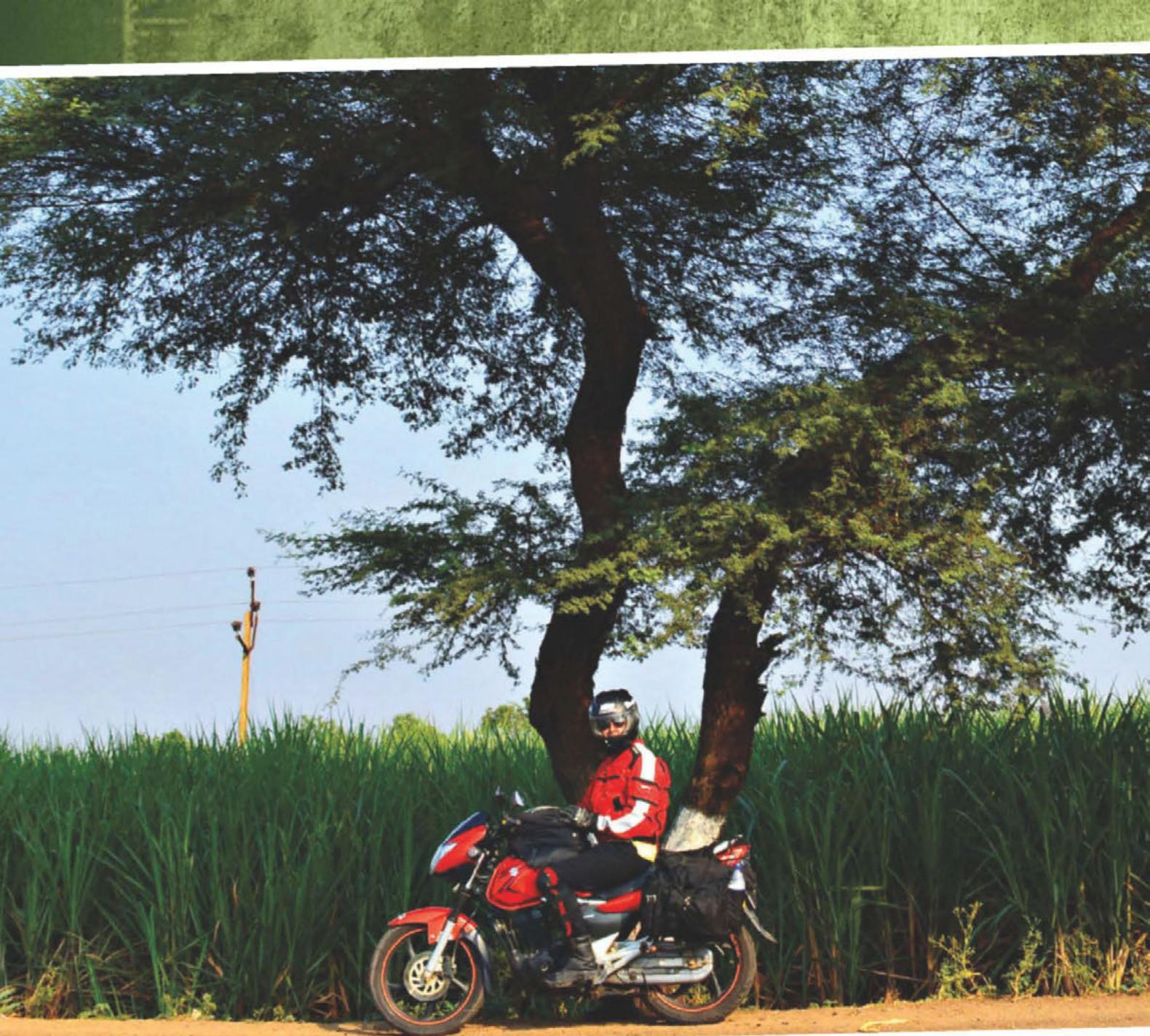
Goa is famous for its beaches and booze, but I was there for a different variety of birds! There is a bird sanctuary on an island called 'Charao Island'. Mandovi River's fertile ground has made this island a beautiful jungle, and it is teeming with a great variety of our flying friends. The 'Dr. Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary' is home to many Indian and migratory birds. Though it requires a bird's alarm clock, as the tour starts at 6.30 in the morning! A jetty took me across from the mainland to the island, and I was collected by the guide on the banks. I went on the morning tour, where I spotted many different birds! Not only the birds, but even the plants were of different variety than what I am accustomed to. The morning safari in the boat was a very relaxing and interesting experience. After returning from the boat ride and having a scrumptious breakfast in the hotel, I left Goa and headed to Kolhapur.

was the original home of the Ganesha in Ganpati Pule. A big step well right across the temple makes an interesting little hike. I rode on the beautiful Konkan highway from there. The road goes through sleepy villages and hidden beaches, and I enjoyed every kilometre of it. I visited some temples on the way, and ended up in Devbagh. This place is a small village that sits between a river and the sea. This golden piece of land is at the meeting point of the river and the sea (called 'sangam'), hence the name 'God's Garden' or Devbagh. It was a terrific experience. The once rustic village now offers facilities to travellers with all budgets. I stayed in a recently constructed hotel which was very close to the Sangam.

There are many backwater activities, passive and adventurous that keeps one entertained. I spotted many dolphins in the morning 'Dolphin ride'. It was a majestic sight to see so many beasts of the sea jumping in unison around our tiny boat! Later, we roamed around various beaches in the boat from the sea. There was an interesting place called 'Nivati Rocks', where giant rocks stood impossibly in the sea. I also did 'parasailing', where you are parachuted from a speeding boat. It is an adrenaline filled activity, and the sudden rush of leaving the ground and gliding in a parachute is addictive. It is a safe activity, though I will advise it to mainly youngsters.

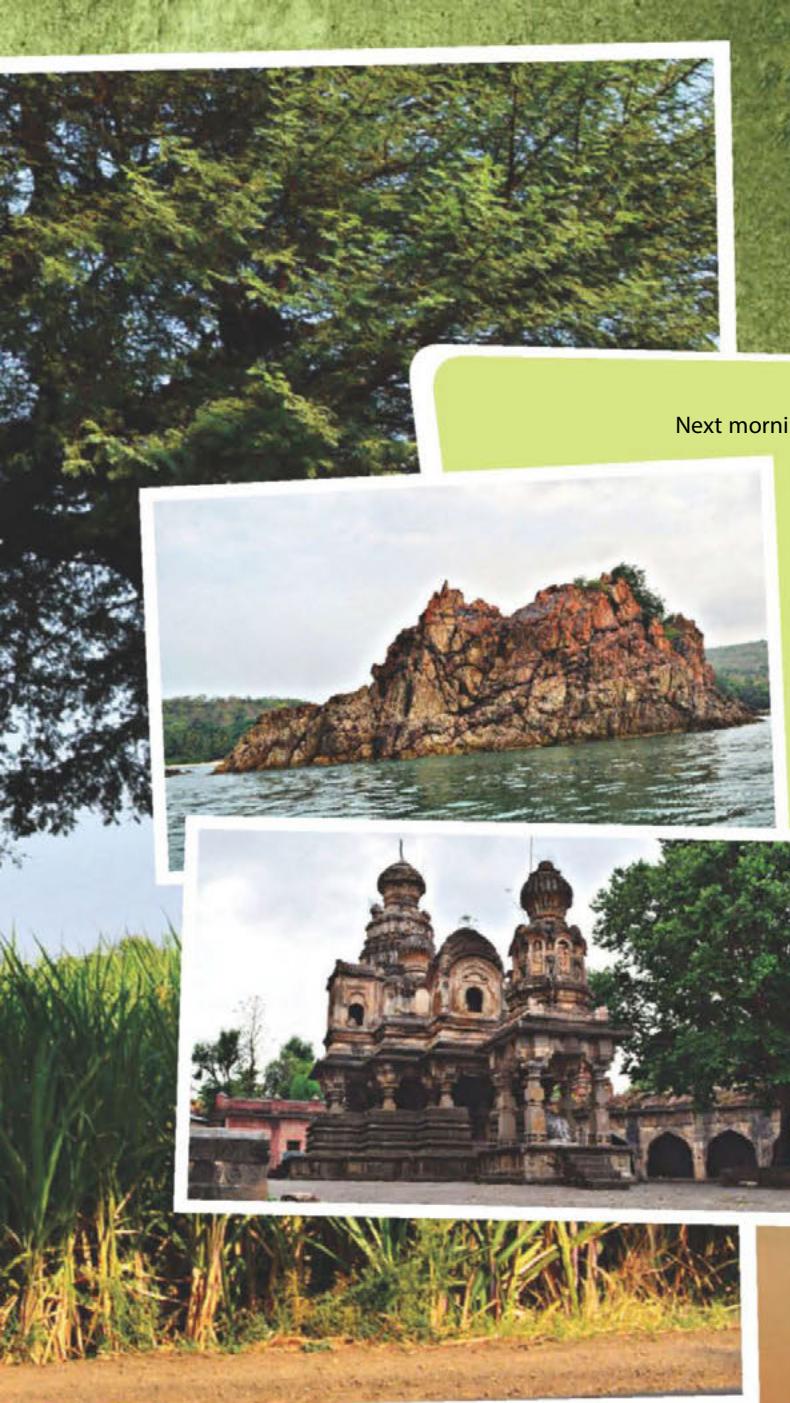
Finally, there was 'Scuba diving'. A few years ago, local conservatives discovered that scuba diving was possible very near to Sindhudurg Fort – a few kilometres from Devbagh. For many generations, no one knew that such a rich marine ecosystem existed right in the neighbourhood! It is an amazing sight, to visit the kingdom of fish, and being surrounded by curious schools of little fish! Swimming knowledge is not required for this activity, and there is no age limit either. After wrapping up the sight-seeing in and around Devbagh, I bid adieu to the beautiful land of Konkan, and headed to Goa. The cool and calm Mumbai-Goa highway welcomed me, and safely led me into the arms of Goa.





A town named 'Sawantwadi' falls on the way. Apart from its historical attractions, Sawantwadi is famous for its wooden toys. For many years, the wooden toys from Sawantwadi have enticed generations of children. Browsing through the market, buying a few toys was a nostalgic experience. There was also a small hotel famous for its fish thali. Since I was finally leaving the coast, this was the last fish for me! I took the scenic route of Amboli. In the monsoons, I would keep one day for Amboli, to enjoy its natural beauty. But during the summer, I passed it by and enjoyed it from the saddle of my bike! While returning I faced a terrible sandstorm. After struggling to ride, and taking temporary shelters in petrol pumps, I finally had to give up and knock on the door of a farmer. The storm had reared its head and was getting stronger, when the farmer welcomed me in his humble home. Sharing the room with his year old child and a goat, I was humbled by the humility shown by his family. Luckily, the storm weathered out, and I ventured on the road once again, with renewed vigour. I reached Kolhapur at night, and found a hotel near the Mahalaxmi Temple.





Next morning, I started early for Panhala Fort, a fort of great historical importance. It was from there that Shivaji Maharaj had daringly escaped the siege of Siddi Jauhar. It was an hour's ride from the city centre. The fort is like a proper village, with schools, hospitals and many hotels suitable for all budget ranges. I have seen a number of forts, but I had not seen a fort where one can drive a motorcycle around and into! As there were tar roads leading everywhere, I explored the fort using Vesta. Panhala is a large fort, and the locations are a distance from one another. One would have a tough time to walk his/her way through all the points. It is better to take a vehicle to cover the interim distances between places.

After Panhala, I took Darshan of Mahalaxmi Temple, and then started homewards. I was on the same highway that I travelled 6 days ago, and all the memories of the tour accompanied me, as I made my way home. The last sight for the trip was Sangam Mahuli – famous for its old temples. There are 3 big temples in the village, two on one shore, and one across the river. I started clicking some shots, but before I could think of venturing inside, raindrops started falling, announcing the arrival of another storm! I gathered my stuff, got on the bike and rode like the wind to get away from the storm. It did catch up, but after a game of cat and mouse I finally left it behind and entered the hot regions of Pune.



And the wanderer returned home, sometime late at night,
 He expected everyone to be asleep, but they were up and bright
 Happily they gathered around him, helped him unlock the things
 They asked him about his wellbeing and they inquired about his wan-
 derings'

'How was the past week?' they wanted to know everything
 'I am really tired now' he said, 'can we talk tomorrow morning?'
 'No, no!' they shouted in unison, 'we wanted to hear it now!'
 'If not everything, then tell us one best thing you've come to know'

He pondered a while, and said 'Went to places I'd never been,
 I tasted many new foods, and saw the things I'd never seen
 I travelled far away, and finally faced my life-long fears
 Sometimes got into situations that jerked out my stubborn
 tears!'

'I had grand plans', he kept on musing,
 'I wanted to learn about everything'
 'I went in hopes of finding a few good stories
 And I returned with a precious treasure of memories'

'I saw man made miracles and natural wonders.
 Met interesting people, faced treacherous thunders.
 But one thing I remember above it all,
 That in past seven days I really missed you all'

A wanderer never travels alone; he rides on the prayers of his
 loved one and friends.
 'I am honoured by the support you have always been, I hope that this
 love never ends!' **xBhp**





! BECAUSE THE STREETS
ARE FILLED WITH IDIOTS

Photos: Sunil Gupta



The KTM RC 390 was first ridden by xBhp at Bajaj's Chakan Plant near Pune (December 2014 Issue). We had come away mighty impressed with the latest offering from the Austrian stable. Recently we got one home for a somewhat longer period. As soon as we got this orange machine, we took it to meet its elder sibling – The RC8. We got to ride the two bikes together the 1190cc and the 390. And at such times the RC390 shows its full potential, it is a proper small sportsbike. From its riding posture, to its agility and light weight. A bike on which you can pop wheelies and stoppies, take corners hard and generally have a ball of a time. And we did all of this and more with the big brother looking

WARS !!



on as the young hooligan had a blast. The KTM RC8 is a gem of a bike from the Austrian manufacturer, which traditionally was known for its off-road motorcycles. It is phenomenal that the bike can hold its own when compared to superbikes of manufacturers that have been at it for years. This is one of the most comfortable superbikes for tall riders, even though the saddle is pretty hard. This 1195cc V-Twin has enough power in the lower half of the rev range, thus allowing the rider to be smooth through the corners. One of the benefits that the RC8 and even the Ducati Panigale 1199 enjoy. We were very happy and consider ourselves lucky to have ridden the RC8, which is very rare to find India.

KTM RC8

Twin Cylinder 1195cc

173bhp

184 kg

2x 320mm Brembo Brakes

13,499 British Pounds



We thank Rohan Chhibbar for taking time out to bring his beautiful RC8 for our ride and photoshoot.

KTM RC390

Single cylinder 373.2cc

43bhp

159kg

1x 300mm Bybre (By Brembo) Brakes

2,13,000 Indian Rupees

Metzeler Sportec M5 Interact tyres

METZELER 



Photos: Sunil Gupta

STICKIER THAN THOU

We had enjoyed riding the Suzuki Hayabusa for 10000 km around India during the OLX Collectors' Ride. The bike is a magnificent piece of engineering and has gathered millions of fans worldwide. In India thanks to the movie Dhoom, this bike was given a big shot in the arm. So much so that children on the streets recognise the Hayabusa, an accomplishment that no other bike can claim!



PIRELLI

POWER IS NOTHING WITHOUT CONTROL



It was time for the 'Busa to get some new shoes. And Pirelli India provided us with the perfect set of rubber for this amazing bike. A set of Pirelli Angel GT was thrown onto the 'Busa and we took it for a spin. After a few careful kilometres of scrubbing in the tyres, it was time to have fun. And the bike with these new tyres, provided loads of that! From tarmac to dirt, we put the tyres through its paces. From knee down cornering to burnouts in the dirt, we did it all! We were really happy with the performance of the Pirellis and we look forward to taking the Hayabusa to the Buddh International Circuit for a track day! **xBhp**



PIRELLI

POWER IS NOTHING WITHOUT CONTROL



XBhp
on the web

XBhp.com



Three bikers from Bangalore ride out to lesser known Kolukkumalai for the weekend

Text and Photos: Sauban Ahmad

INTO THE

M

Kolukkumalai

was a complete offbeat experience and I proudly say that I have done at least one adventurous thing in my life. The experience of riding to the world's highest tea plantation was in stark contrast to my past rides. I have ridden off-road previously but this experience was completely different, especially with two great riding partners Suvrajit and Jeevan. Riding has definitely got me in touch with wonderful people like them.

In February Suvrajit and I were looking for a place to ride and he zeroed in on Alamparai Fort, Tamil Nadu. Fortunately we got to know in advance that there is not much to see at Alamparai Fort and the weather wouldn't be conducive either. That location was cancelled but the ride plan was on because where there is Suvra dada there is a way. A very interesting destination was the fruit of our research and we decided to explore Kolukkumalai. This gorgeous place is about 7,900 ft. above sea level and you have excellent views of the far off plains in the bordering state of Tamil Nadu. The distant hills slipping in and out of the mist is a captivating sight. It is about 38 km from Munnar. The place is only accessible by Jeep or motorcycles as was our choice. If not then you can trek! There is no accommodation at Kolukkumalai, and as such we stayed in Suyanelli for the night.

.....KOLUKKUMALAI.....

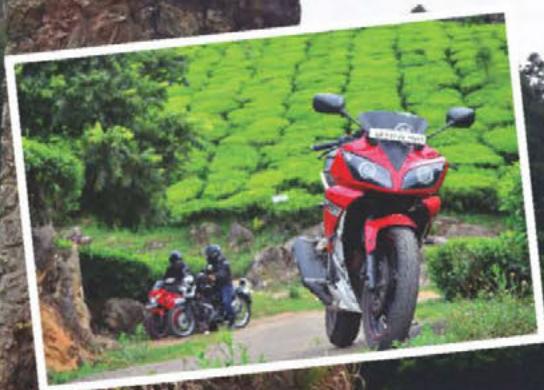
The morning of the ride I left my place and went to the meeting point which was Dada's house where Jeevan and Dada were already waiting saddled up and ready to roll. We took very few breaks Enroute so that we could reach the destination soon and explore the place. As we started very early in the morning we took a quick tea break at Attibele. After which we directly headed to Salem. The feeling of being back on the saddle, wind whooshing through the visor was completely out of this world. We took a break at Salem, had coffee, did some night photography and headed to Dindigul chasing the first sunrise. The weather was wonderful till then. The ride was resumed after a quick sunrise photoshoot, but we realized that instead of going towards Dindigul we were moving towards Coimbatore! U-turn happened and after 40 odd extra kilometres we were back on track with breakfast at Dindigul. A good break of 30 minutes and we were back on our saddles. We were happy because we were on schedule. But the heat of Tamil Nadu was increasing by the minute which resulted in multiple small breaks. After crossing Theni we took a right diversion and were on Kochi-Dhanushkodi Road. There starts the Ghat section. People going to Munnar from Dindigul take this road. The roads were new constructions with wider tarmac. The view while crossing the Ghats is breath-taking but unfortunately we didn't stop because we were supposed to stop there on the return leg. After crossing the Ghats we took a right towards Bodi Methu to Suryanelli Road. The left goes to Kochi-Madurai-Tondi point highway. Around lunch we reached Suryanelli. For a while I felt that I was surrounded by tea carpets around me. All the fatigue disappeared after witnessing the beauty of nature. Meanwhile Dada and Jeevan went inside were having problems with the homestay owner, as he refused having received the advance booking amount from Yatra.com. A few phone calls later the matter was resolved and we got our lodging. Over lunch the homestay



owner told us about the road conditions and few past attempts done by riders to reach the top. Armed with this new information we decided to explore Suryanelli that day and ride to the top early the next morning for the sunrise. Roads weren't great but no problem for bikes. Finally we got a chance to shoot some good pictures. The weather was cool during the day. We also went to a lake named Anayirankal Dam. We spent a good 2 hours there. The ambience around the lake ensured that we spent our entire evening there. All of us were busy clicking pictures, walking around the lake. Usually elephants come to drink water there so it's not recommended to camp there, unfortunately we didn't spot any elephants either. After the sun set it started drizzling, so we headed back to our room. After an early dinner we went into hibernation mode with the hope to get up early. But that didn't go to plan!



The alarm was set and we slept with the hope of waking at 4 in the morning and witness the sunrise from the top. But that didn't happen. What did happen was that I woke up at 4, saw the others just as sleepy as me and rolled over and went back to sleep. Finally the day started at a more humane 6. We had our morning tea and headed to Kolukkumalai to witness the graceful beauty of nature. From Suryanelli the Kolukkumalai tea factory is around 10 odd km. This 20 km (to and fro) was the toughest road I have ever ridden. That off-road experience turned out to be the most adventurous till today. And covering this area on a faired bike like the R15 was the icing on the cake. Stopping at corners witnessing the breath taking views and again moving forward with a determination to conquer the top was a feeling which every



traveller wants to experience. We came back after 4 hours, although there is a way to go ahead but that would have cost us the whole day so we decided to move down after the top factory point.

Around 11 AM after a good breakfast we started our return journey. As soon as we left Suryanelli I noticed something amiss with the odometer of my bike. While adjusting the tank bag my left hand hit the odo cable and disconnected it resulting in some serious tension during the ride. As the connection was loose, the yellow warning light started blinking and I was afraid of facing a blown fuse. The fuse did blow up thrice but somehow we managed to reach Theni till my last fuse blew up. It was Sunday and no service centre was open. We went to a mechanic



and I had a tough time explaining the exact problem because he barely understood Hindi and I didn't know a word of Tamil. Although Jeevan tried to explain the situation the mechanic hardly understood the exact problem. We knew the fuse would blow again so we decided to direct the current flow. I was sure the yellow light would blink again but at the same time no more damage would come to the bike. It was 4:30 PM and we were really running late. After fixing the bike, soon we crossed Dindigul but things got complicated then. The war among the rain gods started and we were subjected to a 2.5 hour downpour. Dada went ahead, while Jeevan and I took shelter under a small shop. First the fuse and now rain, I was ready to blow my own fuse! But I would like to thank both my riding partners for their cool attitude while I was facing problems with the bike. Around 6:30 PM Jeevan and I resumed the ride; Dada was waiting around 100 km ahead. When we reached the meeting point, Dada was already drenched. We were about to reach Salem but rain was still playing hide and seek. We called a few people in Bangalore and also weather forecast was showing heavy rain near Bangalore. It was tough to ride in the rain especially during the night. So keeping safety in mind we spent the night at Salem and headed to Bangalore early the next morning. We booked a decent room at Salem. We had an early dinner and bunked for the night, as we wanted to ride out early next morning. Next morning also turned out to be very interesting for me. I have never ridden from Salem to Bangalore early in the morning. It was refreshing riding back to Bangalore with a bunch of experiences and memories. I never expected to experience something this wonderful. Finally around 7:30 AM we were back home after an exhilarating ride to Kolukumalai. **#Bhp**





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Assam Bikers have their annual biking celebration in the northeast of India

Text: **Lakheswar Mahanta, Dhrubajeet Deka**

Photos: **Bidyut Bikash, Sameeran Nath**



These days there are countless clashes going on between people of different races and castes resulting in many innocent lives being lost. Assam Bikers 3 main objectives have been - Promote safe riding, Unite Bikers and develop Brotherhood among bikers and people in general.

On the first Sunday of 2015, 4th January, Assam Bikers organized a New Year Brotherhood Ride with the objective to reduce the growing difference between people of different places. With more than 150+ bikes and 200+ bikers and bikernis taking part, the feeling of brotherhood was there to be seen by everybody. This was successful largely due to the voluntary and eager supervision of a group of bikers riding from Tezpur and Nagaon. A number of riders from Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Sibsagar, Jorhat and Golaghat merged with the group from Tezpur. Besides that, another group of riders from Nagaon were eager to join the whole clan at our destination. The three groups started their ride to Bikers Hill, Sitajakhala.

One by one, the Assam Bikers family members began gathering at the starting point. Final bike count there was 81 with 120 riders. News Live and News time Assam were also present. The news channels helped spread the motto of safe riding to the masses and also spread our New Year wishes to everybody watching. Honourable DCP of Assam, Sri Pranab Jyoti Goswami graced the occasion with his presence. He was honoured with a phulangamucha and a trophy by social worker PriobhaPhukan and a trophy by one young Bikerni. Finally, Sri Goswami flagged off the ride with the Assam Bikers flag.

We were proud that numerous bikers from Dhubri, Bongaigaon, Nalbari, Lakhimpur and Shillong took part. A notable inclusion was a female rider who rode solo. The ride started amidst a slight drizzle. The cold and the rain didn't deter the spirits of the 120 riders that had gathered. All the bikes were with their headlights on, riding in two straight lines, with the rain falling on the curvy roads of Jorabat, it was a magical sight indeed. As the rally went on, bystanders clicked photos. Cars and picnic parties sped by the bikes and stopped in front of the rally just to click and record the moment in their cameras, which lifted the mood of every one of the riders even more. In spite of the constant drizzle and heavy traffic due to picnic parties, we safely reached our destination - Bikers Hill, Sitajakhala. Instead of heading directly to Biker's Hill, we proceeded a short distance



Brotherhood

to merge with the bikers who had come from Nagaon and Tezpur. Now 150 bikes strong, we proceeded towards Bikers Hill in two disciplined lines.

The picnic parties present at the location shouted and screamed in delight on seeing such a large number of bikes together and the colourful tents of the picnic parties brought a smile to everyone's face. The bikers parked their steeds in a big circle, the size of a cricket field! Along with the bikes, two 4-wheelers also went with the group, carrying supplies and emergency kits. The two wheelers were parked together to form a somewhat temporary dais. Two tables were laid under a nearby tree which served as food counters. After refreshments, a game of helmet tower termed as 'The Safe Heads Monument' was organized inside the circle of bikes, dividing the bikers into three





groups, Guwahati, Tezpur and Nagaon (We wear our helmets like crowns and respect it, hence discourage bikers to keep their helmets on the ground). Out of the three, the Nagaon team succeeded in putting up the tallest tower and were duly awarded a biker trophy. A biking related quiz and a "best pillion" game followed. The bikers were encouraged to sign on a given white helmet and write their comments on an Assam Bikers white board. The main event, for which every biker eagerly awaited was finally unveiled. A band from Tihu, "Puhor" composed the Assam Bikers Anthem- *"Josh Hai"*. The lyrics describe the objectives of the group and our motto and is a mix of three languages, English, Hindi and Assamese. The members of Puhor gifted the CD of the song to Assam Bikers and asked the most senior member of the group, Lakheshwar Mahanta to unveil it.

After this the winners of all the competitions were honoured with a biker's trophy which was made from a rear chain sprocket and a certificate each and it all ended with a group photo of everyone involved in the ride. At 4pm, each and everyone took an oath to ride safe in the future and started the journey back home. *BBP*

G2G

TO THE LAND OF COFFEE

xBhp Bangalore Chapter Ride Together to Chikmagalur

Text: **Rajesh Nikkam**

Photos: **Tapabrata Mondal, Sharad Talekar and Rajesh Nikkam**

It had been some time since the Kudremukh ride; Suvrajit and I were planning for a G2G and one day on the Bangalore thread on the forum I saw - destination Chikmagalur. With no second thoughts I joined, and then the hunt for accommodation began. As the days passed riders started confirming their presence for the ride, finally we were 10 riders from Bangalore and 1 from Chitradurga.

D-day arrived and thankfully everyone arrived at the meeting point on time. As always the first break was at Mayura. After breakfast we split into two groups and the fast bikes roared off while the rest followed. After munching some miles we saw Sanjoy stopped at the side of the road with smoke having enveloped his bike. All the 'biker mechanics' tried their hand at diagnosing the problem, and finally we found out that the engine oil was leaking and had spilt all over. We topped up the engine oil at the nearest petrol pump and searched for a Bajaj Service Centre which we found in Hassan. It took almost an hour to fix and in the meantime the fast group carried on to the destination. Back on the saddle after the unexpected break we crossed Belur and just before Chikmagalur the rain gods welcomed us and a few kilometers later it was completely dry and that's where we started cornering. As I was waiting at the homestay's gate for the rest a passer-by told me that one of our guys had crashed, it was Sayantan. Fortunately he escaped with minor bruises. A good lunch was served and we planned to go to Hirekolale Lake for the sunset but nature had its own plans! It rained cats and dogs for almost two hours, sipping hot tea and eating bhajjis though was the silver lining on the dark cloud! It was cold as the rain stopped, and the day ended with a bon fire and lovely dinner.

The next day started with the sunrays falling directly on our face to wake us up and we could feel the heat of peak summer at 8 in the morning. Just before breakfast we did a little photo shoot and decided to go to Mullayanagiri, the highest peak in Karnataka. A really good place to visit and the last 5 km is complete off-road which makes it even more exciting. A good 2 hours we spent there and headed back to Chikmagalur for lunch. After which there was straight arrow roads home.

A good ride it was and we hope for many more! **xBhp**





Members of the xBhp Delhi and Trivandrum chapters in their respective cities collected funds to help the victims of the deadly Nepal earthquake that destroyed the tiny Himalayan country in April 2015.. On May 10th, a Sunday the Delhi xBhpians met up at the usual haunt, the xBhp Dhaba and showed their generosity towards the people who have suffered majorly in this natural calamity. On the other side of the country, the Trivandrum xBhpians also got together to collect funds for helping out people of Nepal. The two chapters together collected Rs 28500/-.

Funds that were collected by the two chapters were sent to fellow xBhpian Tilak Soni, who is based in Uttarkashi. Tilak Soni through his organisation 'Where Eagles Dare' previously had helped people of Uttrakhand after the devastating floods which washed away large parts of towns. With the experience of conducting relief work in the mountains and the knowledge of victim's requirements, Tilak was

the most capable person to lead his experienced team to Nepal. With the contribution of xBhp's two chapters and countless other generous individuals, Tilak went to Nepal armed with supplies filled in a truck. xBhp thanks each member who contributed and the efforts being put in by Tilak Soni and WED. We also wish the people of Nepal a speedy recovery to normalcy after their devastating loss. **#Bhp**





I AM A BIKER...



...AND I DON'T JUMP
THE LIGHTS

...AND I RESPECT
THE SPEED LIMITS

...AND I DON'T RIDE
LIKE A HOOLIGAN



RESPONSIBLE RIDING, A SOCIAL MESSAGE BY

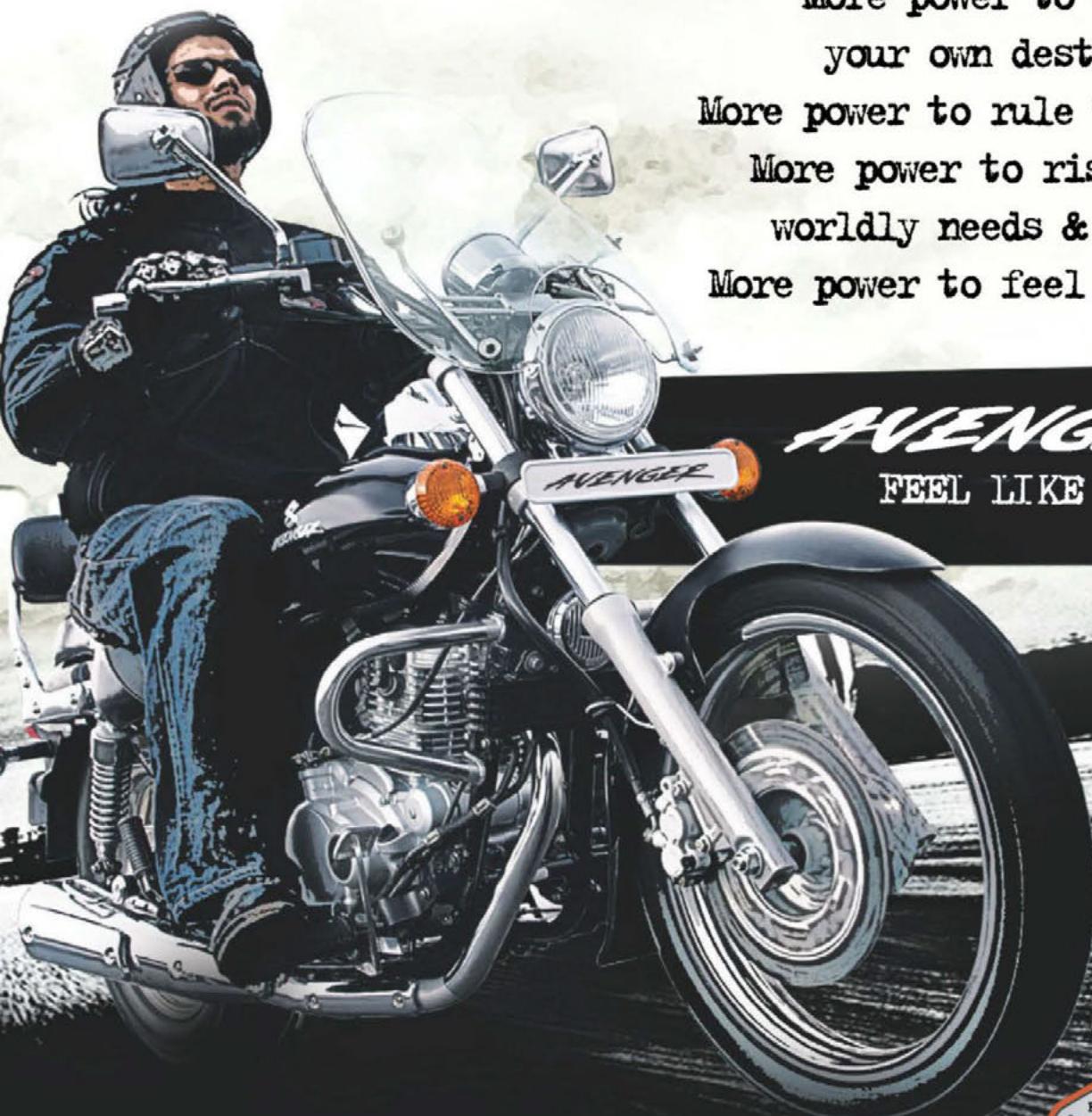
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